

TIP TOP WEEKLY

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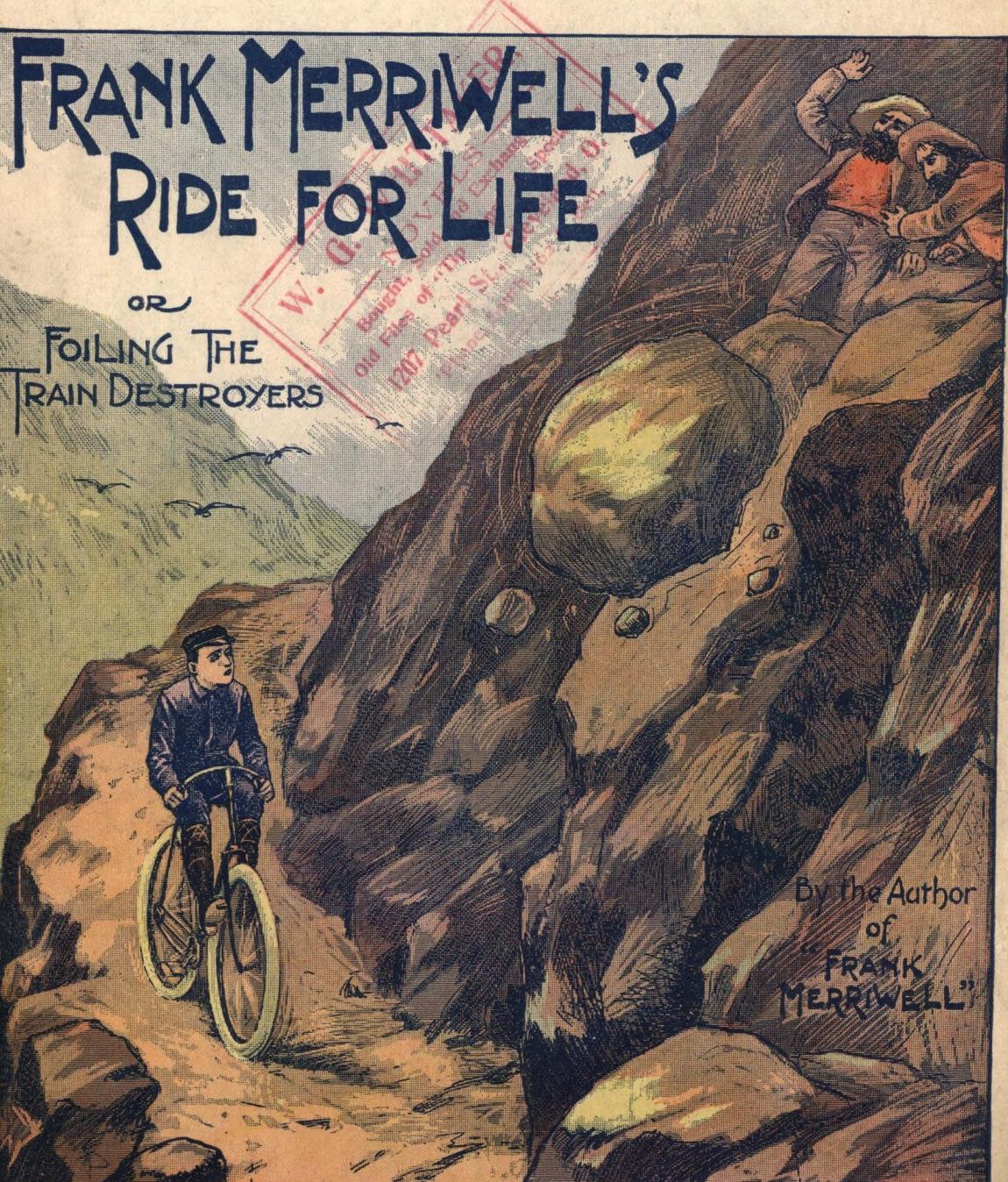
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FRANK MERRIWELL'S RIDE FOR LIFE

OR

FOILING THE
TRAIN DESTROYERS

W. D. HOWELLS,
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By the Author
of
"FRANK
MERRIWELL"

THE HORRIFIED BOY FELT THAT HE WAS DOOMED TO DESTRUCTION BY THE FALLING ROCK.

Read the Novel Premium Offer on Page 32.

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Frank Merriwell's Ride for Life OR, FOILING THE TRAIN DESTROYERS.

By the Author of "FRANK MERRIWELL."

CHAPTER I.

TWO BOYS, A DOG AND A MAN.

A plank bridge spanned the mountain stream just above a deep pool. Astride the end of a plank that projected at least a foot and a half beyond the others sat a boy. The boy was fat and healthy in appearance. He was barefooted, and an old straw hat was planted on the back of his head. There was a hole in the crown of the hat, and through this hole protruded a wisp of yellow, straw-colored hair. He wore neither coat nor vest, and his tattered trousers were supported by a single suspender. His pink print shirt, faded by sunshine and occasional washings, was open at the neck.

The boy was fishing, having a twine

line attached to the end of a rather crooked willow pole. Apparently he had not been very successful, for there were no indications of a catch about him.

Close beside the fat boy sat a fat dog, seeming to take a dull sort of interest in the employment of his master. In color the hair of the dog was a match for the wisp of hair protruding from the hole in the boy's hat. Both boy and dog seemed completely contented in the warm sunshine which poured down into the valley.

Around a sharp bend of the road that led down to the bridge flashed a lad on a bicycle, the nickel trimmings of the wheel glittering like polished silver in the sunlight.

The bicyclist was taking it easy, with his feet resting on the coasters; but the

moment he saw the boy and dog he applied the brake gently, gradually bringing the spinning wheel to a stop at the bridge.

The boy who was fishing looked up with apathetic curiosity, and then bobbed his line.

"Hello, you!" called the lad who had dismounted from the bicycle.

"Hello," said the fat boy, as if it cost him an effort.

"What are you doing?"

"Fishing."

"Of course," laughed the young wheelman, who was dressed in a handsome suit, and had a blue sweater bound upon the handle-bars by a "carrier." "Foolish question of mine. What are you catching?"

"Nothing."

"You do not seem to be having good luck."

There was a moment of silence, and then, in a desperate effort to carry on the conversation, the bicyclist observed:

"Nice dog you have there. What's his name?"

"Fish."

"Fish? Well, I should call that a queer name for a dog. Why do you call him that?"

"Because he won't bite."

"Oh, say! that is good! Danny Griswold should be here to hear that! Ha! ha! ha!"

The young wheelman's merry, musical laugh rang out, whereupon both the fat boy and the fat dog turned and looked at him in a way that showed they were wondering what the matter could be.

There was something so solemnly ludicrous about the appearance of the boy and the dog that the merriment of the other lad increased.

The boy drew up his line and deliberately began to wind it round the pole.

"What are you going to do now?" asked the cyclist.

"Goin' home."

"What for?"

"Cause I kinder guess pap's right."

"About what?"

"Fishing here."

This did not seem to be very satisfactory progress in the way of opening the conversation, but the bicyclist continued:

"What did your father say about fishing here?"

"Said there warn't no fish, and every blamed fool that come along would laugh at me."

"And I am the first fool that has come along? Well, this is rich! How far do you live from here?"

"About two looks."

"Two looks? How far is that?"

"Well, you look up the road this way just as fur as you can see, and that's one look. When you git up there, you look just as fur again as you can see, and there is the house where I live. Goin' that way?"

"Yes."

"Better wait long enough for me to git home before you do, if you're intendin' to ride that thing past the house."

"Why should I wait?"

"To give me time to do it."

"Do it? Do what?"

"Git mam down suller to look at the rat-trap an' pap out back of the house to ketch the ca-af."

"Why should you do that?"

So you can git past the house. If you hump along a good fast hitch, you'll be out of the way before the rest of the children can holler pap and main out after ye."

"Why should your father and mother trouble me?"

"Well, you see last summer was the first time we ever see anybody a-ridin' bisuckles, and then two fellers rid right up inter our yard and called for some water. Mam was skeert and the children was skeert. Mam she run in to the tea-kettle

and got a pail of hot water, and she give it to um. Cricky! how they did holler when that water went all over um! Then they got out in the road and hollered some things at mam. By that time pap he had heard the row, and he came hippin' it into the house. When he found out what was up, he b'iled, and he just got down his gun and chased them fellers up the road a whole look. He didn't git near enough to shoot, and he wouldn't done any shootin' if he had, for the gun wasn't loaded; but he's all harrered up about fellers that ride bisickles, and he's been waiting ever since to git a good slam at um."

The young cyclist whistled.

"It is plain that your father is a good man to keep away from," he smiled. "What is his name?"

"Jed Chubbs."

"And your name is—what?"

"Dud Chubbs."

"My name is Frank Merriwell, and I am with a party of bicyclists who are traveling from New York to San Francisco."

"Whee! Scissors! but that must be a long ways! Most as fur as from our house to Stroudsburg, I expect. Where's the rest of your crowd?"

"They will be coming along pretty soon. I pumped on ahead of them. These mountain roads are not particularly favorable to fast travel. What is the name of the nearest town?"

"Red Rock."

"How far is it to Red Rock?"

"Well, it's more looks than I ever counted."

"The railroad runs through Red Rock, doesn't it?"

"Yep. Railroad goes on to Iron City, and that's a walloping big place."

"How are the roads between Red Rock and Iron City?"

"Mostly up and down."

"Then it is possible that we had better

take the train from Red Rock to Iron City."

"I wouldn't do it if I was you."

"Why not?"

"They've been havin' piles of trouble. Iron City is where the car shops are, and there's a strike there, so pap says. They've been taking new men into the shops to fill the places of the old men, and the old men are raisin' pertic'ler jinks. They've dumped one train off the track, and killed the ingineer. Pap says he wouldn't ride on one of them trains now for two dollars, and when pap wouldn't do a thing for two dollars it's mighty dangerous."

At this moment a horseman was seen descending the road to the bridge. He was a red-whiskered, rough-looking man. The horse he bestrode looked like a valuable animal.

Even at a distance, Frank Merriwell took an instinctive dislike to the stranger.

"Do you know that man?" he asked.

"Yep," nodded Dud Chubbs.

"Who is he?"

"Bat Watkins."

"One of your neighbors?"

"Nope. Dunno where he lives. He kinder gallivants round from this place to t'other."

"What is his business?"

"He don't seem to have much of any business, 'though he sometimes trades hosses. Pap says he's no good."

The near approach of the horseman checked further discussion of him. He glared sullenly at the young bicyclist as he approached, and drew rein within a few feet of the two boys, his horse shying a bit as if alarmed by the sight of Frank's glittering wheel.

"Looker here, you youngster," growled the man, still glaring at Frank, "what be you doin' round these parts with that thing? Don't you see my hoss is scaf of it? Why don't you keep it out of sight till I git past?"

Frank flushed a bit, somewhat aroused by the stranger's insolent manner and bullying tone.

"I did not suppose your horse would be frightened if I were dismounted, sir," he said. "And it strikes me that I have as much right on the public highway as you have."

"What's that?" roared the red-whiskered man. "Darn my eyes! Do you dare sass me? Why, I'll git off my hoss and wring your neck!"

And he made a move to dismount.

CHAPTER II.

BLOW FOR BLOW.

The man had a whip in his hand, and he gripped it in a significant manner as he swung his leg over the saddle-horn.

"You'd better cut sticks!" whispered Dud Chubbs in Frank's ear. "He's ugly, for he's been drinkin'. They say he killed a man once when he'd been drinkin'."

But Frank Merriwell displayed no intention of fleeing from the man. Instead of that, he calmly lay his bicycle down on its side, and then straightened up, facing Bat Watkins.

The man seemed surprised by this action, and he stared at the lad, pausing as he sat sidewise on the horse.

Then, of a sudden, as if struck by an idea, he swung his leg back, struck the horse a sharp cut with the whip, and rode straight at Frank, as if he would go over both boy and bicycle.

Merriwell did not get out of the way, but he caught the horse by the bit, and, with astonishing strength, fairly threw the animal back on its haunches.

"Not so fast, sir!" he cried, clearly. "There is plenty of room for you to pass, without trying to ride over me."

A grated exclamation of anger broke from the lips of Watkins.

Swish!—the whip cut through the air,

and—swack!—it coiled about the shoulders of the dauntless lad.

Again the whip was lifted, but it did not descend the second time, for Frank Merriwell sprang up, caught the man by the collar, and dragged him from the saddle.

Bat Watkins was astounded by this display of strength from one whom he had considered a mere boy, but he sprang up, having struck in a sprawling position, and grappled with Frank.

Then Watkins received another shock. He was one of the strongest men in the Blue Mountains of Pennsylvania, and he expected to handle the youth with ease. Instead of that, before he could bring his lumbering strength into play, his feet were knocked from beneath him, and he landed with a thump upon his shoulders.

In the mean time, the released horse had whirled about and galloped up the road a short distance, pausing to feed where there was a patch of grass.

The breath was knocked from Bat Watkins' body, and he lay upon the bridge, staring straight up at the sky, and blinking his eyes in the bright sunshine.

The fat boy gasped for breath, and the fat dog wiggled his tail the least bit, in a manner that seemed to express satisfaction, as well as astonishment. He did not exert himself to bark, for all of what had taken place.

"Scissors!" whispered Dud Chubbs, his eyes threatening to pop from his head. "Never saw anything like that! If pap knowed this, he'd hunt his hole and stay there till you got past, Mr. Merriwell."

Frank stood with his hands on his hips, looking down at Watkins in a scornful manner, his eyes flashing. He did not offer to do the man further injury, seeming to feel that he should not strike a foe that was down, even though that foe had

assaulted him in a manner that was ruffianly.

Bat Watkins sat up and stared at Merriwell.

"Did I fall? or was I pushed?" he muttered. "Something run ag'inst my feet, and throwed me down."

He did not seem to realize that the boy he had attempted to assault a second time had accomplished his downfall.

Seeing Dud Chubbs' dog, the man gave an exclamation of rage.

"It was that critter!" he cried. "It must have been!"

Then he got upon his feet, and, before either lad realized what he contemplated doing, swung his heavy boot back and then brought it forward.

Bung!—the boot struck the fat dog. There was a grunted howl, and a yellow body was lifted from the planking of the bridge and sent whirling through the air.

Splash!—the dog fell into the pool of deep water above the bridge, and sunk from view.

"You brute!"

Frank Merriwell started forward, his face growing pale with anger.

Dud Chubbs gave a howl of grief as he saw Fish disappear beneath the surface of the water.

Watkins caught up his whip from the ground, and met Frank Merriwell with another cut about the shoulders.

That did not drive the determined and angry lad back, although it seemed to cut through his clothing and lay open the flesh.

Without a cry or an exclamation, Frank darted in and closed with Watkins before the latter could strike again.

Then, with a wrestler's trick, Merriwell once more sent the red-whiskered ruffian sprawling upon the hard planks, wrenching the whip from his grasp as he fell.

"Blow for blow!" shouted the young

cyclist, as he swung the whip aloft, clasping the handle with both hands.

There was a fierce hiss as the lash cut the air, and a swack when it struck the body of the overthrown brute.

A howl of astonishment and pain broke from Watkins' lips, and he writhed beneath the punishment.

"Blow for blow!" repeated the angered lad with the whip, as he again swung the weapon aloft. "That was one—this is the other!"

Watkins had turned upon his hands and knees, and was trying to get up. Down came the whip, striking him across the back, and curling about his body, seeming to cut wherever it touched.

Down upon his face it drove him, bringing another and louder howl from his lips.

Although the three persons on the bridge were not aware of it, four boys had appeared far up the road down which Merriwell had coasted to the bridge.

First came a jolly-faced lad, who was closely followed by a dark, handsome youth. Behind them were a rather muscular-appearing, but fleshy, youth, and a coal-black negro boy.

They all were dressed in suits like that worn by Frank Merriwell, and were coasting down the road on handsome bicycles.

These were the lads who made up Merriwell's party of bicycle tourists, and they were bound for San Francisco, having started from New York.

Harry Rattleton was in advance, and he was followed by Jack Diamond, Bruce Browning and Toots, the colored boy.

"Scrate Gott—I mean great Scott!" shouted Harry, as he caught sight of the party on the bridge. "There's rum kind of a sumpus—no, some kind of a rumpus down there!"

"That's right!" cried Diamond, in excitement. "Look! look!—Frank is fighting with a man!"

"Land sakes to goose grease!" gurgled

Toots, his eyes bulging. "Dat is jes' lek Marser Frank! Nebber seen de time dat boy didn't git inter some kind ob a scrape if he could find one!"

"Well, I'll be hanged if I can see why he wants to fight on such a hot day as this, after pumping over these beastly roads!" observed Browning, in a wearied manner.

"See there!" rang out Diamond's voice, as the spinning wheels carried them swiftly down the road toward the scene of action at the bridge. "Frank is striking the man with a whip!"

"Wee-yew!" squealed the darky. "Dat was a blister-raiser, shoie's yo're bawn, chilluns!"

"I could distinctly hear the wack of the crip—I mean the crack of the whip!" exclaimed Rattleton.

They all heard the man roar with rage and pain, saw him go down on his face with the second blow, and then saw him scramble on all fours to get out of the whip's reach.

But Merriwell did not attempt to deliver another blow. The man had struck him twice, and he had returned blow for blow.

Now, with a contemptuous laugh, he flung the whip into the stream, from which the yellow dog was crawling, having risen to the surface and swam to the bank.

Dud Chubbs was leaning forward, his pudgy hands on his fat knees, looking like an overgrown toad, as, with bulging eyes, he watched the conflict between the man and boy. It was plain enough that Dud had never before witnessed anything quite so amazing in all his life.

"Scissors and shotguns!" gurgled Dud. "Won't pap have a cunnipshun fit when I tell him about this!"

Finding he was not pursued by the boy who had retaliated upon him with his own whip, Bat Watkins hastened to get upon his feet. He turned and saw Frank

standing beside the bicycle, regarding him with the greatest contempt and scorn.

One look showed Watkins that this remarkable lad had cast the whip aside, and then the ruffian's rage was something frightful to witness. His face worked with the most deadly passion, and his eyes glared, while his flesh seemed to turn a sickly reddish-yellow. From his mouth came a torrent of shocking language.

Into the bosom of the man's shirt he plunged one hairy hand.

"Look out!" cried Dud Chubbs, crouching and lifting one arm in front of his face, as if to ward off something.

Out came that hairy hand, and it gripped the haft of a knife, the sunlight glittering on the bright blade.

A devil danced in Watkins' eyes as he advanced upon Frank Merriwell. He did not see the other lads who were coasting toward the bridge on their silent steeds.

Frank retreated a step before the man, and then Harry Rattleton shot onto the bridge at full speed, not having applied the brake, and ran full into the ruffian with the knife.

Watkins was sent flying through the air, and Harry plunged from the bicycle, landing upon the man, who had dropped the knife.

Rattleton's knees were driven into Watkins' ribs with terrible force, sending the man's breath from his body with a grunting puff.

The ruffian served as a cushion, so Harry was not injured in the least, and he quickly scrambled up.

Diamond, Browning and Toots were on hand by this time. Jack and the colored boy leaped from their flying wheels, and brought them to a quick stop, while Frank caught hold of Bruce, and aided him to slacken speed and get off.

"All down!" cried Harry Rattleton, cheerfully. "Set 'em up t'other alley! Hello, Frank! You seem to be rucking

sort of a raisin—I mean raising sort of a ruction."

"What is the matter, any old how?" asked Browning, with languid interest.

"Oh, nothing much," smiled Merrifield; "only that brute tried to ride over me with his horse, and then, when I would not let him, he whacked me with his whip."

"And you gave it to him in return!" flashed Diamond, with satisfaction. "That was right, Merry!"

"I gave him blow for blow," said Frank.

"That wasn't enough; you should have given him three for one."

"And he pulled a knife on you!" burst from Harry. "That's why I ran the miserable rascal down!"

"And he kicked my dog into the water," said Dud Chubbs, who was fondling Fish, the dog having returned to the bridge.

Bat Watkins was groaning and clinging to his side, where Rattleton's knees had been planted with such force.

"A ducking will do him good," laughed Frank. "Come on, fellows! let's drop him into the stream."

"Hurrah!" shouted Harry, with delight. "That is just the trick! Catch hold in a hurry, fellows."

They made a rush for Bat Watkins, five strong, fearless, resolute young lads, for Toots did not propose to miss the opportunity to have a hand in the fun.

Watkins had heard their words, and he tried to scramble up and get out of the way; but in this attempt he was not successful.

They grasped him by his legs and arms, despite his blows and kicks, and, lifting him from the ground, swiftly carried him to the side of the bridge.

"Don't!" entreated the cowed ruffian, in a whine—"don't throw me in there! I can't swim, an' I'll shure be drownded! I didn't mean to hurt anybody—I was

only foolin'! Don't ye dare throw me in!"

"One!" counted Frank. "Swing him!"

They lifted the ruffian and gave him a swing in the air.

"Two!"—another swing.

Watkins began to beg and rave at the same time.

"Three!—let him go!"

With a great surge, they sent the miserable scoundrel flying through the air, gasping and trying to clutch at something to keep himself from dropping into the water.

There was a great splash, and Bat Watkins disappeared from view beneath the surface of the water.

CHAPTER III.

JOLLY CYCLISTS.

"Oh, scissors!" cried Dud Chubbs. "Never no such thing happened to him before this day!"

Watkins' head appeared, and he coughed and strangled, vainly trying to climb right up into the air out of the water, which sent him back beneath the surface again.

The yellow dog, dripping with water, sat down on the end of a plank, and serenely watched the struggles of the man, seeming to derive a large amount of satisfaction from the spectacle.

"Oh, my! oh, my!" burst from Dud Chubbs. "What will pap say when he hears of this!"

Watkins' head bobbed up again.

"Help!" he gurgled. "Pull me out—ough!—or I'll—splugggh!—drownd! I can't swum!"

"Well, stand up and wade ashore, you confounded jackass!" cried Harry Rattleton. "The water can't be more than four feet deep."

Watkins heard and understood. He stood up, after a struggle, and the water did not come up to his armpits by at least

six inches. As he stood there, thoroughly soaked, spitting water and gurgling, he presented a most ludicrous spectacle.

On the bridge six boys shouted with laughter, for Dud Chubbs joined the others, his sense of the ridiculous being awakened at last.

It seemed that even the dog grinned somewhat, and it is certain that he wagged his short tail in a manner that indicated genuine amusement.

The drenched and humiliated ruffian coughed and snarled. Then he shook his knobby fist at the boys on the bridge, and ground forth :

"Laugh, burn yer hides! I'll git even with the whole crowd! I'll make ye sorry ye ever run acrost Bat Watkins!"

"Better keep your threats bottled up, or we may take a notion to have some more fun with you," advised Frank Merriwell.

"Oh, I'll have fun with you!" mumbled the man in the water. "I'll have fun that will make you sorry you was borned!"

"What's that?" demanded Frank. "I did not catch it. Please speak a little louder."

"Go to blazes!"

Watkins waded to the shore, and came forth on the side of the stream by which he had approached the bridge.

"We'd better get his knife, so he will not find it and attempt to use it again," said Diamond.

Jack ran out to where the weapon had fallen, secured it, and then sent it spinning and glinting in the sunlight straight out into the water at the very centre of the pool below the bridge.

Watkins saw all this, but he simply ground his teeth and glared wickedly at the Virginian.

Sitting down on the rocky bank of the stream, the man elevated first one foot and then the other, permitting the water to run out of his boots.

Laughing and joking, the boys watched him while he did this.

"I'll bet it is the first bath he has taken for a year," said Rattleton.

"He should tender us a vote of thanks," drawled Browning.

"He may intender," punned Harry.

"By golly!" grinned Toots. "I bet dat baf is gwan to mek him sick! He done look po'erful pale roun' de gills."

"From his general appearance," observed Merriwell, "I should say that he has taken more water into his stomach today than has passed down his throat before this during the present year."

Watkins arose, gave them a mad look, and then turned his back upon them, and made off up the road toward the spot where his horse was still feeding.

"Scissors!" came from Dud Chubbs, as he gazed admiringly at Frank Merriwell. "But you're a great wrastler! You throwed Watkins down just as easy as winking."

As Watkins walked slowly up the road, he was seen to cling to his side as if it pained him.

"You knocked him out with your knees, Harry," said Diamond.

"Well, that was a kneesy job," chuckled Rattleton, and then he moved away, as if he feared some of the party would hit him with something hard.

Bat Watkins did not find much trouble in capturing his horse, and he painfully swung into the saddle. Before riding away, he turned toward the party on the bridge, at whom he fiercely shook his fist. Then he urged his horse up the road.

The boys watched him till he disappeared from view.

"I hope that's the last we see of him, but I doubt if it is," said Rattleton.

"Oh, you'll see him ag'in," chuckled Dud Chubbs. "He's madder'n a whole nest of white-tailed hornets what has had a stone chucked right into the middle of um. He wasn't talkin' what he didn't

mean when he said he'd git even with you chaps. If I was in your places, I'd just turn right round now and make back tracks as fast as I could hump them bisuckles along."

To Dud's surprise, the bicycle boys laughed heartily at this, and Rattleton said:

"I was hoping we would not see him for his own good, for we are liable to use him much rougher than we did this time, if he bothers us any more."

"But—but he killed a man once."

"Well, it's very likely he won't be in condition to kill another man if we have another ruction with him."

"No, for we won't leave him in the shape of anything human," came rather savagely from Jack Diamond.

"Jee!" gasped Chubbs. "Where do you fellers come from?"

"From Yale!" cried the five cyclists, in unison.

"Never heard of that town," admitted Dud. "But if all the fellers in it is like you fellers, I bet they can lick the Squog Holler boys."

At this Merriwell and his friends laughed heartily, and Frank said:

"I don't know about that, but we'll have to go on and leave you now, Mr. Chubbs."

"Scissors! Don't go for to 'mister' me! Ain't you goin' to wait till I hook it on to our house and tell pap and mam to lay low and let you go by 'thout fussin' with yer?"

"I don't think we can stop that long. We can't lose so much time."

"Well, then, all I ask is that you use pap as easy as you can if he comes out and rumpuses round with you any. I'll come along as fast as I can and help him git himself together and crawl into the house after you have wallopéd up the earth with him."

"I don't think we shall have any trouble with your father," reassured

Frank. "We will skim past his house so quickly that we'll be gone before he gets ready to kick up a rumpus with us."

"In that case," said Chubbs, thrusting his hands into his pockets and standing with his bare feet wide apart, "pap'll never know how nigh he has been to an earthquake till I tell him what you done all alone ter Bat Watkins. I dunno's I'll dast tell him either, for fear he'll think I'm lyin' to him, and take me out in the wood-shed and try to convince me of my errer. Pap has a very strikin' way of arguing such p'ints with me."

The boys looked at him sharply, but Dud seemed utterly unconscious of an attempt to say anything funny.

Frank bade the fat boy farewell, and then the little party mounted their wheels and started up the road.

Dud Chubbs and his dog watched their departure with great solemnity.

The road became so steep that Frank finally set the example by dismounting and trundling his wheel along. The others were glad to do this, particularly Bruce Browning, who was sweating and puffing from the exertion.

"I never lost flesh so fast in all my life," Bruce declared. "I'll bet I am pumping it off at the rate of five pounds a day right along. And just think—our journey across the continent is scarcely begun!"

"Oh, we have crossed the State of New Jersey," laughed Rattleton.

"But we were very much bored while we were doing it," said Frank.

"Yes," said Browning, "New Jersey is a great State in which to get bored. What I objected to most was the very long bills we received."

"That's right," nodded Merriwell; "those bills did seem to draw hard on us."

"Oh, say!" cried Jack; "I wish you fellows would stop joking about Jersey

mosquitoes. You set me itching every time you do it."

"It was in Jersey that I ran over the deaf and dumb man," said Browning.

"What did he do when you ran over him?" asked Diamond.

"Why, he jumped up and called me every sort of a hard name he could lay his fingers to," answered Bruce, gravely.

This caused the others to laugh again, and Toots roared with them, his high-pitched "coon" laugh awakening the echoes.

"I don't see but we are getting along very well without Danny Griswold," Frank observed. "It seemed that he used to be the one of our crowd who was continually cracking jokes."

"Danny was a comical chap," nodded Diamond. "Fun seemed to bubble spontaneously from him. He must have taken it from some of his ancestors."

"I suppose that is right," said Browning. "Danny claimed that he clipped the most of his jokes out of the funny papers, and his ancestors were handy with the shears. I believe that a long line of his ancestors were tailors."

"That was sort of a clothes line, wasn't it?" chuckled Rattleton.

"Yah! yah! yah!" whooped Toots, opening his mouth so wide that there seemed imminent danger that he might lose the upper half of his head. "Nebber heared no such funny fellers as yo' chaps is! I jes' cayan't sleep nights 'cause I laff so much finkin' ober de jokes dat yo' chilluns git off durin' de days. An' I's laffed so much dat I's all sored up down roun' de wish-bone."

They came to the top of the hill at last, and, a short distance beyond the crest of the rise they saw a man who was gathering up a large number of articles that seemed scattered all over the road. The man was carefully piling the articles into a pack that lay beside the road.

"A peddler," said Frank.

"He seems to have met with some misfortune," observed Jack.

"It is evident that his pack broke open," remarked Harry. "He is gathering up his goods."

They mounted their wheels and coasted down toward the peddler.

CHAPTER IV.

DAN ROCKAWAY, THE SHERIFF.

The moment he saw them, the peddler threw both hands above his head and ran out of the road, wildly crying:

"Moder uf Mosesh! Ven I don'd ged me oudt uf der vay I been kildt der nexd dime!"

It was plain from his appearance and his speech that he was a Jew.

The boys applied their brakes, and gradually brought their bicycles to a stop near the spot where the old Jew was crouching beside his pack.

"Hello!" cried Frank, cheerfully, as he sprang to the ground. "You seem to have met with an accident."

"No, mine friendt," was the trembling reply; "I med vid der tervil himself! Loog ad dall mine peautiful goots vat vas scaddered der roat ofer! Fater Apraham! Vat haf I tone to pring dis shudgment ubon me!"

The old fellow seemed afraid that the boys contemplated plundering him, and he clutched his pack in a nervous manner, his hands shaking and his face seeming pale.

"Don't be alarmed," said Merriwell, reassuringly. "There is no reason why you should fear us. We will not offer you any harm."

At this the old man brightened up, but did not seem entirely satisfied, for he still clung to his pack.

"Ven a Creestian dells a Chew anyding aboud nine dimes oud uf den he don'd mean vat he says," the old fellow whined.

"That is rather hard on the Christians," said Frank; "but I am afraid there is some truth in it, and that is why about ten times out of ten the Jew does not mean what he tells a Christian. Come, fellows, take hold here and help pick up this poor man's goods."

"Don'd you do id!" screamed the peddler. "Uf you led 'em pe, I haf dem all. Uf you bick dem ub, maybe I don'd haf so many."

It was some time before the boys could convince the peddler that they had no thought of robbing him, but he finally decided that they spoke the truth, and he was glad to have them assist him in gathering up the scattered articles.

"How does it happen that they are scattered about in such a manner?" asked Frank, observing the manner in which the goods were strung along the road.

"Vell, I dell you," answered the Jew, who had said that his name was Solomon Levi. "Id vas dis vay. I vas comin' ub der roat ven a man on a hawse vas comin' town. I durnt avay ouldt, but ven he geds near me, he bulls der hawse ofer ad me und tries der run me town."

"It was that villain Bat Watkins!" cried Jack Diamond. "He was so infuriated that he tried to vent his spite on some one, and this poor old man was the first person he came across."

"I dried to ged out uf der vay," Levi went on, "bud I vasn't kveek enough, und der hawse sdrikes mine back und knocks me vlyng. Dat preaks der back open und sbeels der goots aferryvare, vile id rool me ofer und ofer, und I shust ged out der vay der feed uf der horse from unter. Fater Apraham!" he cried, clasping his hands and rolling up his eyes; "dat vas near peen der death uf me!"

"Did you observe if the man seemed to be dripping wet?"

"I pelief so."

"It was Watkins. The miserable

wretch should be tied to a whipping post and lashed!"

The boys aided Levi in getting his goods together and binding them into his pack, and he thanked them again and again.

"You vas coot poys," he declared. "Uf id pe Chreestian or Heprew, Solomon Lefi don'd vorged anypoty vat vas kindt to heem."

"Oh, it didn't cost us anything to give you a helping hand," smiled Frank. "It is just about as easy to give anybody a lift as a push."

"Maype I couldt soldt you somedings," suggested Levi. "I haf der createst pargains in eferyding vot I carry, und I make you a sbpecial discound."

Frank laughed as he noted the business eagerness of the old man suddenly develop. He assured the peddler that they were not in need of anything he had to sell.

Just as they were preparing to go on their way, two horsemen were seen coming up the road at a gallop, the hoofs of the animals raising a cloud of dust.

It seemed that the old Jew regarded the approach of the horsemen with nervousness, not to say alarm. He looked to the right and left of the road, as if contemplating flight, but seemed to decide that he could not get away, and so was shouldering his pack in a most natural manner when the horsemen came clattering to the spot.

One of the horsemen was a big, black-bearded man, broad-shouldered and powerful in appearance, while the other was a little hatchet-faced fellow, with restless, foxy eyes.

As the big man brought his handsome black horse to a halt by flinging him back with a sharp, strong pull, he leaped from the saddle, and landed beside Solomon Levi, his hand falling heavily on the shoulder of the cowering peddler.

"You're ther very critter we're arter!"

declared the big man, in a hoarse, heavy voice.

"Yes, he's the very critter we're after," piped the hatchet-faced man, in a parrot-like manner.

"You was makin' tracks purty fast, but you didn't git away," came harshly from the big man.

"No, you didn't git away," parroted his companion.

"Holy Mosesh!" quavered the peddler, in great terror. "Vat haf I done now dat I vas caught in dis vay?"

"You know well enough what you have done," was the harsh declaration. "We're goin' ter yank you right back ter Red Rock, and chuck ye inter jail."

"Sufferin' Repecca!" wailed the old Jew. "I vas an honest man! I don'd huld nopoly! Dell me v'y I been put in chail."

"I don't propose to waste no breath with you," came roughly from the big man.

"That's it," agreed the man with the hatchet-face; "we don't propose to waste no time with you."

"But uf you vas a Chreestian I peg you to dell me vat I haf tone dat I peen put indo chail," pleaded Levi.

The men were not going to pay any heed to this appeal, but Frank Merriwell stepped forward, calmly and distinctly saying:

"It seems to me that it is no more than fair that you should tell the man why he is to be thrown into jail, presuming that you have the right to take him back and put him there."

The big man glared at Frank a moment, and then thundered:

"Who questions Dan Rockaway's right to put any man in jail? I am the sheriff of this county, and I could put you all in jail if I wanted ter!"

"Yes," echoed the little man, "he is Dan Rockaway, the sheriff, and he could put you all in jail."

"If you are the sheriff," said Merriwell, not in the least disconcerted, "I presume you have a right to make arrests; but it is no more than just that you should let a man know why he is arrested."

"Wal, dern me!" exploded Rockaway,

staring at the beardless lad who dared so boldly face him.

"And dern me, too!" squeaked the hatchet-faced man on the white horse, also staring at Frank.

Merriwell carried a certain air of dignity, despite his years, and his manner impressed Dan Rockaway, who finally said:

"Wal, I'll tell ye what this Jew critter done. He stole a watch from the house of Mr. Bramber Sykes, who accompanies me. The peddler called there, and the watch, which is an old and cherished heirloom of ther family, was a layin' on the centre table. When the Jew went away the watch went with him."

"So hellup me Apraham, dat vas nod der truth!" cried Levi. "I nefer sdole anypody's vatch in all mein life!"

"What proof have you that he took the watch?" asked Frank.

"Why, it was gone, an' that's proof enough."

"Hardly. You should have stronger proof than that."

Rockaway glared, and then burst into coarse laughter.

"Why, I kin arrest any critter on suspicion," he declared.

"Where is your warrant?"

"Right har!"

Then the sheriff produced a big revolver, which he held in a most careless manner, with the muzzle pointing straight at Frank.

CHAPTER V.

THE JEW'S ESCAPE.

"That certainly is rather convincing authority," admitted the boy, coolly. "That I can't deny. But I would suggest that you search this peddler. If he has the watch you will find it on his person. If you delay to search him he may find a way to get rid of it and thus destroy proof of his guilt."

"Sarge me!" cried Levi, eagerly. "I vas an innocent man! I vas glat to be searged."

"It is a good idee," nodded Rockaway, restoring the revolver to its usual place of concealment. "I will do it."

Then giving the Jew a stern look he said:

"Looker har, you light-fingered Israel-

ite, if you try to run while I am about this I'll fill your skin so full of holes it won't hold husks!"

Then he began his search of the old man's person.

In a very few minutes the sheriff drew from one of Levi's inner pockets an old-time watch and chain, uttering an exclamation of satisfaction as he beheld it. He turned and passed it to Bramber Sykes, saying:

"Is that your watch an' chain Mr. Sykes?"

"It be!" cried the hatchet-faced man, with evident delight. "It be, shore! I feared I'd never see it ag'in."

"That settles it!" declared Dan Rockaway, as his hand again settled on the shoulder of Solomon Levi.

The old Jew seemed utterly astounded.

"So hellup me cracious!" he cried, in despair, "I nefer knew dat vatch was in mein bocket! How id come dere I nefer can dell!"

"Oh, of course not!" came sarcastically from the sheriff's beard-hidden lips. "But that kind of a yarn won't go a little. Back to Red Rock you go on the jump, you dirty old heathen!"

Frank Merriwell had nothing to say. The discovery of the watch upon the Jew silenced him.

And yet, for some reason, he could not feel that everything was right. The distress of the peddler touched him, and Levi's protest that he did not steal the watch seemed to be made in all honesty.

However, he suddenly remembered how, on the appearance of the pursuing horsemen, the Jew had seemed alarmed, and had looked as if he contemplated flight.

"Much obliged ter yer fer suggestin' that I search ther old thief immediately," said Dan Rockaway, "for he's slick, an' he might got rid of the watch on his way to town. I don't suppose," he asked, with broad sarcasm, "that you will object to my takin' the critter ter jail now?"

"Of course not," admitted Frank, feeling a bit crestfallen, but making the best of it. "I did have a fancy that you had made a mistake in thinking the man a thief, but now——"

"You see I know my own business.

Wal, that's a good thing. Har, Sykes, take charge of the critter's pack, an' I'll take charge of him."

Then the sheriff produced a stout rope, which he proceeded to tie about the waist of the Jew, who still protested that he was innocent, "so hellup him Fater Apraham."

With a coarse command, Rockaway silenced the old peddler. It did not take him long to arrange the tying to suit him, and then he swung into the saddle.

"Now, critter," he commanded, "just you amble along in front of me, an' don't try no monkey shines. If you do—wal, I won't be responsible for any damage that may happen to you."

"No, he won't be responsible for any damage that may happen to you," chirped the man on the white horse, like a parrot.

The big sheriff passed the pack up to Sykes, who took charge of it, and, in a few moments, the two men and their captive started down the road.

As they moved away, Solomon Levi seemed to cast an appealing glance toward Frank Merriwell, and there was something in the old man's look that made the lad long to render him some assistance.

"Well," said Bruce, who was lazily stretched on the ground at the roadside, "Uncle Solomon seems to be in a bad scrape. Perhaps this will teach him not to let his fingers stick to articles he does not own."

Frank started up almost savagely.

"I do not believe the Jew stole that watch!" he exclaimed.

"Don't?" came in surprise from Bruce. "How is that?"

"Something seems to tell me that he did not."

"It strikes me that something is lying to you in this instance, Merry."

"Yes, it looks that way," admitted Harry Rattleton. "How did it happen the peddler had the watch in his pocket, if he didn't steal it?"

"Yah," put in Toots, "dat am de quection. When a nigger steals a chicken, dey don' alwus hab to fine de chicken, fo' dey couldn't do it widout a stomach-pump. If dey fine some ob dat chicken's feeders stickin' ter de nigger's

back teeth, or anywhar roun' his pusson, dey say dat am ebidence ernough. Yah! yah! yah!"

"But I do not believe that watch was placed in the old Jew's pocket by himself," asserted Frank.

Diamond lifted his eyebrows, and looked surprised, while Harry laughed.

"Well, it hakes a teep—I mean takes a heap to convince you. How did the watch happen to be in his pocket if he did not put it there?"

"Some one else put it there."

"Oh, nonsense! Why should anybody do such a thing?"

"That is a question I can't answer, but it is possible the Jew has an enemy or enemies who did the job."

"It strikes me that you have allowed your sympathies to be aroused at the expense of your good judgment, Frank," said the Virginian, gravely.

"All right, fellows," said Merriwell; "have it to suit yourselves, and I will think as I like about it."

For some time they lay on the ground beside the road, watching the two horsemen and their captive moving slowly on their way till they disappeared in the hollow.

At last, they arose, mounted their wheels, and coasted down the road. In the hollow they pedaled past the old Jew and his captors, and made a brace to climb the next rise as far as possible.

After climbing quite a distance, they dismounted and trundled their wheels till they came to a favorable strip of road.

Then they passed a house, which they were led to believe was the home of Dud Chubbs. Neither "Pap" Chubbs nor "Mam" Chubbs appeared, but there was a small regiment of rather dirty and ragged youngsters of various ages drawn up in front of the house, staring with popping eyes at the whirring bicycles and their handsomely-dressed riders.

At length, the boys stopped again, Harry having found it necessary to tighten his saddle, which had worked loose. Frank pumped a fresh supply of air into his tires, and, while they were thus employed, Rockaway and Sykes approached, still driving the Jew before them, as if he were a dumb beast.

Frank asked the boys to wait till the

trio came up. His sympathy for Levi was fully awakened, and he resolved to ask the peddler some questions.

As the trio approached, Frank was standing beside his handsome wheel at one side of the road. But he did not get an opportunity to ask any questions, for, at the very moment when the Jew was opposite the leader of the bicycle boys, something of a startling nature happened.

With a lightning-like movement, Levi slipped out of the noose that had been about his waist. One spring took him to Frank Merriwell's side. Then he snatched the wheel from the hands of the astonished boy, vaulted into the saddle, caught the pedals with his feet, and went skimming away.

"Wal, burn my hide!" came in an explosive manner from the lips of Dave Rockaway, who was so astonished that he sat stiff and staring in the saddle for some seconds.

The boys were scarcely less amazed by this unexpected action of the old peddler, and Solomon Levi had obtained quite a start before they recovered.

With an oath, the sheriff whipped out his long-barreled revolver, and pulled it down on the escaping captive.

The manner in which Rockaway brought the weapon to bear on Levi satisfied Frank that he intended to bore the Jew. Further than that, it satisfied Frank that he was pretty sure to succeed in his purpose.

"Stop!"

With that cry, Merriwell leaped at the sheriff, and struck his arm aside.

The revolver spoke, and Bramber Sykes ducked his head and squealed with terror, for the bullet had almost clipped the brim of his hat.

A torrent of fierce language escaped the lips of the sheriff.

"What do ye mean?" he snarled. "Do yer want that thief ter git away? I have a mind ter bore you a few times fer that trick!"

He looked furious enough to turn the weapon on Frank.

"I saved you from committing murder," came fearlessly from the boy. "The crime committed by that peddler, if he committed a crime, would not justify such an action, even though he

were escaping. But he will not get away. After him, boys, and recover my wheel!"

"We'll do it!" was the cry.

In a moment, Diamond and Rattleton were spinning along the road in pursuit of the fugitive, while Bruce Browning, more cumbersome in his movements, followed them as closely as he could.

Toots, the colored boy was the only one who remained with Frank.

Uttering language that cannot be repeated here, Dan Rockaway gave his black horse the spurs, and joined in the chase.

CHAPTER VI.

FRANK ARRESTED.

"Well, there has been excitement enough to-day to keep a fellow's blood from stagnating," observed Frank, as he watched the bicyclists and the horsemen disappear from view in pursuit of the flying Jew.

"By golly! dat am a fac,'" grinned Toots. "Nebber seen nuffin' lek it in all mah bawn days. I done didn't run away from yeh, Marser Frank, fo' I kind ob thought yo'd want somebody teh stay an' keep yeh comp'ny."

"That was very thoughtful of you, Toots," said Frank.

"Yo' jes' get right on mah bisuckle, Marser Frank. Toots kin hoof it along all right."

Bramber Sykes had hurried his old horse along after the others, still clinging to the Jew's pack, so Frank and Toots were left alone.

Frank mounted the darky's wheel and pedaled slowly along, while Toots kept at his side, trotting like a dog.

They had proceeded about three-fourths of a mile when they came upon Bruce Browning, who was resting at the side of the road, while he wiped the perspiration from his flushed face.

"It was no use, Merriwell," puffed Bruce. "I couldn't keep up with the procession, and I had to quit the game."

"Were the others gaining on the Jew when you stopped?" asked Frank.

"Well, I don't know, but I rather doubt it. Jupiter, but that old sinner can pump a wheel along to beat the band! I didn't think it could be in his old hide. He is a wonder."

Frank was not pleased, and still he felt a desire to know that the Jew had escaped from Rockaway. At the same time, he wished to recover his bicycle.

When Bruce had recovered his wind, they mounted their wheels and continued on their way, Toots still trotting along with them.

In this manner they proceeded till they came in sight of a small collection of houses that were huddled in a rocky notch amid the mountains.

This collection of houses proved to be the village of Red Rock, taking its name from the big red bluffs back of the town.

The railroad ran through Red Rock and continued on its way through the notch in the mountains.

As the three boys pedaled into the village they discovered signs of excitement. It was late in the afternoon, and the villagers were gathered in little knots upon the streets.

"I wonder what can have become of Jack and Harry?" speculated Frank. "It can't be they chased the Jew through this village."

As they approached a building which looked like a country tavern, the question was answered by the appearance of the two boys.

Frank immediately noted that both lads looked disappointed and crestfallen.

"Hello!" he cheerfully called. "The old Jew gave you a hard pull before you overtook him, didn't he?"

"Before we overtook him!" spluttered Rattleton. "Why, vill the old hangin—I mean hang the old villain! we didn't overtake him."

"Whew!" whistled Frank. "Do you mean to say that he escaped with my bicycle?"

"That's just what he did," sheepishly nodded Harry.

"I never saw an old man that could pedal a wheel like him," said Diamond. "He seemed to have wings."

"Did he get away from Rockaway?"

"Sure."

"Well," said Frank, "that is the only satisfaction we can have—and that is rather small."

"But Rockaway is boiling hot about it."

"Expected he would be."

"He blames us."

"What for?"

"Levi's escape."

"How is that?"

"He says we aided him."

"Aided him? Well, that is rich! He must think we have bicycles to give away! This little trick of Mr. Levi's puts me in a bad box, unless I recover my wheel some way, for I'll have to go on by rail to the next large town where they have bicycles for sale."

"Well, Rockaway has been blowing around about it, and Bat Watkins is here in town. I got a glimpse of the ruffian, and he gave me a fierce look."

The boys proceeded to the tavern, and Frank noted that the citizens of the place scowled at them in an unpleasant manner.

Near the tavern Dan Rockaway was talking earnestly to a small group of rough-looking men. As the boys approached, Rockaway suddenly left the group, and advanced to meet our friends.

Frank saw that the big sheriff had singled him out, but he did not falter in the least. With utter fearlessness, he met Rockaway.

"Wal, I'm glad ye come right along," declared the man, gruffly. "It saved me ther trouble of goin' arter yer."

"Going after me? Why should you do that?"

"Because I want yer. You're arrested!"

Rockaway gripped Frank's arm as he uttered the final astonishing declaration.

"Arrested?" cried Merriwell. "What for?"

"Helpin' the Jew thief get away, for one thing."

"For one thing!" scornfully echoed the boy. "What is the other thing, if there is another charge?"

"Wal, thar has been another attempt to wreck a train. It is kinder proved that the peddler was no peddler at all, but one of the gang of train-wreckers. That makes it seem that you must be connected with them, as long as you helped him to git erway."

A scornful laugh broke from the boy's lips.

"It seems that all the proof you have against me is worthless," he exclaimed.

"I was robbed of my bicycle by the peddler, and yet I am arrested for helping him escape! That is justice—nit!"

"Wal, you can't deny that you sympathized with ther peddler."

"I did sympathize with him, for I believed he was unjustly arrested. Now that I have been arrested on such a flimsy charge, I sympathize with him more than ever. I belive he was innocent."

"Look here, Mr. Sheriff," spoke up Jack Diamond whose blood was aroused, "you May get yourself into trouble by this high-handed proceeding. You have no right to arrest a person on mere suspicion, without an atom of proof."

"Oh I have, proof," declared Rockaway, grimly.

"What sort of proof?"

"Proof that there was an understanding between the Jew and this fly youngster."

"Bah!" cried Frank, derisively. "I deny it!"

"You were heard talking with him alone, and enough of your talk was understood so that it is known fer sartin' that you two are in cahoots," declared the sheriff.

"It is a falsehood! Who heard me talking with him?"

"I did!"

Bat Watkins, scowling blackly at the arrested boy, yet with a triumphant gleam in his eyes, advanced from the crowd.

"You?" cried Frank—"you? Do you claim that you heard such talk between the peddler and myself?"

"You bet I do!"

"When was that?"

"When you met the peddler at the bridge."

"But I didn't meet the peddler at the bridge, and you know it."

"Why, the peddler was arrested away this side of the bridge!" exclaimed Diamond.

"That was arter he had come back," grinned Watkins.

"Sheriff," said Frank, "this man is lying, as you can see."

Bat Watkins gave a snarl, and started at Frank with his hands clinched, but seemed to think better of it when four

other boys instantly placed themselves by Merriwell's side.

"Just say the word, old man," whispered Rattleton, "and they'll never be able to take you!"

The villagers were flocking around, attracted by the excitement.

"Steady," cautioned Merriwell. "It won't do to try to jump them. They are too many for us."

"But you are in a bad scrape, old man," palpitated Rattleton. They will believe this ruffian Watkins, and he'll swear you into a hole."

"I can prove that he lies."

"How?"

"By the word of Dud Chubbs, the fat boy at the bridge. He was there when I reached the bridge, and he knows the Jew was not there. Keep cool, and this matter will come out all right."

Both Rattleton and Diamond were aroused, and, but for his better judgment, Merriwell would have been defiant. Something seemed to tell Frank that Rockaway would be pleased if they kicked up a difficulty, so he held them in check.

Bruce Browning stood there awaiting orders, and Frank felt that the big fellow would prove rather a bad man to tackle, despite the fact that he was overburdened with flesh. Considering everything, Merriwell could depend on being stanchly defended in case a struggle came about, but he knew better than to bring it on.

"You'll have plenty of chance to clear yourself when you go up before the judge," growled Rockaway.

"In the mean time," said Frank, "what do you propose to do with me?"

"Take yer to the lockup."

"How long am I to be kept there?"

"Till some time to-morrow, when you'll be brought to trial."

"Well, this is agreeable!" exclaimed Merriwell.

"It is an outrage!" flared Diamond. "Somebody shall be sorry for this piece of work!"

He gave Watkins a fierce look, and the red-whiskered ruffian returned it with a triumphant smile that was not pleasant to witness.

It did, indeed, seem an outrage, but

they were unable to avoid it, and so Frank Merriwell was led away to the lock-up, like a criminal.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE LOCK-UP.

A small wooden hut that stood near the upper end of the town was the lock-up of Red Rock.

The interior of the hut was divided into two rooms, one for the prisoner or prisoners, and the other for the jailer.

At the time of Frank Merriwell's arrest it happened there was no other person confined in the lock-up, so, with the exception of his jailer, the unlucky boy had no one to whom he could talk.

Frank's friends had accompanied him to the jail, and they were followed by nearly one-half of the male population of Red Rock.

"We'll stand by you to the end, Merry," Jack Diamond had whispered. "You may depend on us."

Frank had given him a grateful smile of thanks, and had received a warm hand-pressure from Jack, Harry, Bruce and Toots in turn, before being taken into the little building.

On the way to the lock-up he had learned that the peddler had given his pursuers the slip by leaving the road and concealing himself in the timber before Red Rock was reached, for it was positively declared that he had not passed through or entered the village.

"Well, this is a jolly place!" exclaimed the boy, when he had looked around the room in which he was a prisoner.

For furniture there was a bare bench and a rude bunk. Air and light entered by an iron-barred window that was set in the wall far beyond the reach of a man.

In the door between the prisoner's room and the room occupied by the jailer was a square opening, across which were more iron bars. Plainly this opening was intended for the purpose of enabling the jailer to watch his captives.

Before being placed in confinement, Frank had been searched by the sheriff and the jailer, who had removed from his possession a pocket-knife—the only thing upon his person that could possibly be designated as a deadly weapon.

When he had looked about the room in which he was confined and had examined the bunk thoroughly enough to satisfy himself that he did not care to attempt to sleep upon it, as it showed unmistakable signs of being infested with vermin, he approached the opening in the door, and looked through into the jailer's part.

A glance showed him that the jailer had things more comfortable. He was provided with a chair, a bed, and a low table, on which lay a short, double-barreled shotgun.

As the boy looked through the grating, the man, who was smoking, picked up the shotgun and pointed it toward the opening in the door.

"Git back!" he ordered.

"Oh, say!" protested Frank. "What is the use to be so unsociable and rude. Now, if I were in your place——"

"Git back!"

He did not dare disobey this second command, for something about the man's manner seemed to indicate that he might shoot without further warning.

"All right," said the boy, with resignation, as he retreated from the window; "I'll get back, but you might talk a little to a fellow, just to cheer him up. Do you know any good conundrums?"

No answer.

"That's too bad," said Merriwell, after a few moments of silence. "I did hope you could think of a few. If you don't mind, I'll give you one. Why is it proper for a man who has lost his right hand to shake hands with his left?"

The jailer continued to remain silent.

"Give it up?" asked Frank.

Not a word.

"Why, that's easy. You see if a man has lost his right hand, then his left hand must be all right."

After some moments of silence, the boy captive called:

"Say, I've got a better one than that. Why do some parrots use very long words? Will you give that up?"

Still the man in the next room did not deign to break his silence.

"It's this way," persisted Frank. "Some parrots use long words because it is natural for them to talk in polysyllables. If that doesn't knock your eye out, I can't hit you with one."

Something like a grunt came from the adjoining room.

"It hit you somewhere, didn't it?" laughed the boy prisoner. "What is the use to be so glum? If I've got to camp in this ranch to-night, I'd like to talk to something besides the bedbugs. Somehow I never seemed to enjoy the company of bedbugs a great lot. They seem to take to me all right, and they make me itch to get hold of them. Do they keep any particular breed of bedbugs here? From what I have seen, I should imagine that you have been taking particular pains to keep the blood pure, and yet it is really difficult for them to keep from mixing the blood."

The face of the jailer appeared at the opening in the door.

"Say," grunted the man, something of a twinkle in his eyes, "you're the queerest chap I ever see, by dad! Is your head all right? or is your brains kinder slewed?"

"Well, I don't know about that," confessed the boy, frankly. "I'm not a specialist on brain diseases. Maybe I'm a little off. If so, hadn't you better talk to me to keep me from going daffy while I am cooped up in this delightful place?"

In this manner, Frank succeeded in inducing the jailer to enter into conversation, and, before long, they were chatting away in the most agreeable manner imaginable.

It seemed that the lad exercised something like a hypnotic influence on the jailer, for, within half an hour, he was in the jailer's room, seated in the jailer's comfortable chair, his feet resting on the top of the table, while he continued to keep the man chuckling by telling him stories that grew more and more laughable as time progressed.

At last, when he had tired of telling stories, the boy began to ask questions.

"How long have you been jailer here?" he inquired.

"Only about a month. Jed Long was jailer before me."

"Where has Jed gone."

"He's dead."

"Oh," said the boy, quick as a flash, "you don't know where he's gone."

"I never see your beat!" laughed the man, who now seemed ready to roar at

anything. "I bet you'd joke if you was goin' to be hanged!"

"I'd be hanged if I would!"

Then Frank asked questions about Dan Rockaway.

"He was 'lected sheriff because he don't fear man ner devil," explained the jailer. "He never did have such a good record as he mought, but he was about the only man as wasn't skeered of the hard characters har in the mountains."

Then the jailer told Frank all about the strike in the car shops at Iron City and the wrecking of one train and attempts to wreck others since the places of the workmen had been filled by scabs.

"The sympathy of the whole of Red Rock is with the men who used to work in the shops," said the jailer. "Nobody in this town won't ride on the rail-road, an' we don't care if every one of their trains is wrecked."

"Train-wrecking is rather dangerous business," commented the boy. "It means State's prison for the men who are caught at it."

"That's right, an' Rockaway'd arrest anybody he knew was at it. Still we kinder think it was a low-down thing for the rich car company to take in furriners an' dagoes ter fill ther places of ther men what was once in the shops."

At supper-time the jailer once more locked Frank in the other room, while he went out and brought in food for them both. Then he called the boy out of the room, and they sat down together and ate off the jailer's table in a sociable manner.

The food was not so bad, and Frank felt that he was getting along very comfortably for all of his confinement in such wretched quarters.

After supper the jailer lighted a lamp, filled his pipe, and sat down to enjoy a good smoke, once more surrendering the easy chair to the boy.

"Don't you know how to sing?" asked the man.

Frank did, and he sang song after song in a musical voice that seemed to charm and soothe the rough man. All the old college songs—the songs that had awakened the echoes beneath the elms of old Yale—he sang there in that rough mountain lock-up, and the enraptured jailer de-

clared they were "good," and called for more.

Of a sudden, Frank stopped short in the midst of a song, exclaiming:

"Hark! What is that?"

From far away at the further end of the town came the sounds of a commotion. Men were shouting hoarsely, and through the night came the wild cry of—

"Fire!"

CHAPTER VIII.

FRANK'S FLIGHT.

"It's a fire!" exclaimed the jailer, springing up. "It seems ter be up at the north end. I live up there. Mebbe it's my house!"

The man was excited. He hustled Frank back into the room for prisoners, turned the key in the lock, and then hurriedly left the lock-up.

As the jailer hurried out into the night, he left the door to his own side of the jail unfastened behind him.

The man had not been gone more than half a minute when Frank, who was peering through the grating in the other door, saw the outside door jerked open and then quickly closed behind a man, who slipped like a cat into the lock-up.

When this man turned about so the light of the smoking lamp fell fairly on his face, a low exclamation of surprise escaped the lips of the youthful prisoner.

It was the Jew peddler, Solomon Levi!

"In der name uf Moses und der prophets, don'd make a noise!" whispered the Jew, with a cautioning gesture. "Fater Apraham! I wouldn't be gaut in here for a hundred tollars!"

"You?" gasped the astonished boy. "How do you happen to be here?"

"Dere don'd peen dime to answer quesdions," declared the peddler, swiftly. "You vant to get oud uf here righd avay, mein friendt."

"How can I get away?"

"I shall hellup you. You haf sym-bathy vid Solomon Lefi, der Chew, und Solomon Lefi don'd vorged id."

Then the peddler turned the key, which the jailer had left in the door of the prisoner's room.

"Come oud!" he whispered.

Frank lost no time in obeying.

"Now," said the strange Jew, "you

want to get oud uf Ret Rock shust as kveek ash you can make dat picygle go."

"The bicycle—where is it?"

"Righd oudsid der toor."

"But my friends—what about them?"

"Don'd you worry apoud dem. Dey vas all righd. You dake der picygle und go sdraight on vor Iron Cidy. Don'd you sdrop ad dat blace, und don'd sdrop before you ged to Ribbledon."

"Rippleton?"

"Yah, dat vas der blace. Id vas peyont der moundains. Ad dat blace you sdrop till you hear vrom your frients."

"But I don't like this idea of running away from my friends," protested Frank. "What will they think of me?"

"Dey know all apoud dat alrety; I haf feexed id vid dem."

"How?"

"I dell you dat after we ged oud. We can't vast dime here, vor der chailer may com pack."

Then Solomon Levi extinguished the light, and softly opened the door. A moment later the man and boy hurried out into the night.

The shouting was stilled now, but from the further end of the town came a reddish glow that told the fire was doing its work.

A strange chuckle came from the throat of the peddler, as he looked toward that crimson sign.

"Id vas a coot thing I vas aple to vind a house vat nopoly vas lifin' in," said the man. "Uf I ditn't, I don'd know vat I coot tone to dake der chailer avay."

This puzzled Frank a little, and he asked:

"What do you mean? What did you do?"

"See dat?" asked Levi, pointing toward the red glare.

"Yes."

"I tone id."

"Done it? Why, do you mean that you set the fire?"

"You pet!" answered the peddler. "I vind oud dat der chailer haf a vamilly und lif in dat bart uf der down, und den I vind von olt house vat nopoly lifs in. Ven der dime comes dat I vant to ged you od uf de chail, I seds der house to purning."

Merriwell gasped for breath.

"Well," he said, "you certainly resorted to extreme measures. Why did you do anything like that?"

"Pecause I don'd think uf no odder way to ged you oud, und you vas in a pad blace, so hellup me Mosesh!"

Frank could not help feeling that the Jew had gone much too far in his action, but he knew he would seem ungrateful if he expressed such conviction, and so he held his peace.

Levi had been leading the way from the vicinity of the lock-up, and they came to a dark spot beneath the shadow of a tree. There was a moon, but it was veiled by clouds, so a sort of thin, ghostly light straggled through and enabled them to move along without hesitation, but not making it sufficiently light to place them in danger of detection.

As they paused beneath the tree, the Jew brought something forward, and then, with a throb of satisfaction, Frank felt his hands fall on the handle-bars of a bicyclee.

"Is it mine?" he asked.

"You pet!" answered the Jew. "Und id vas a tandy! I vas aple to ged avay vrom der sheriff vid id. Dit you thing I vasn't coin' to pring id pack? Vell, Solomon Lefi vasn't a thief uf der sheriff dit make pelif vind a sdolen vatch on him."

"Solomon, you are all right!" declared Frank, enthusiastically.

"Dankyer. Now, you voller me."

The Jew led the way till they were on the road beyond the limits of the village. At last, he stopped, and said:

"Now, all you vant to do is chust ged on dot picygle und ged oud. Don'd sdrop vor anyding till you ged to Ribbledon."

Once more Frank felt that he was not doing right in deserting his friends in such a manner, and he said so, expressing a belief that they might be accused of setting him at liberty when it was found he had escaped.

"Don'd worry apoud dat," advised Levi. "I veexed dat all righd. Efery von uf dem vas ad der vire. I tolts dem to go to der vire, und sday to der vire till id vas all ofer. Nopody can say dey helluped you ged avay."

"And you are sure they will be able to join me in Rippleton?"

"You leaf dat to Solomon Lefi. He vasn't somepoty's canary pird! I veex id all righd. Go, now."

Merriwell grasped the hand of the singular Jew.

"You are all right!" declared the boy again. "I shall not forget this job."

"Goot-py."

"Good-by."

Frank sprang into the saddle, and was soon pedaling swiftly along the road that led through the notch.

He had not gone ten rods before there was a great outcry in the village, followed by the double report of a gun.

"Ha!" exclaimed the escaping cyclist, as he leaned over the handle-bars and increased his speed. "The jailer has discovered that I am missing!"

CHAPTER IX.

CAPTURED AGAIN.

In the night it always seems that the cyclist covers ground with the greatest speed and ease. He seems to skim over the surface of the earth, almost without touching it, and surely such a ride produces a sensation that is akin to that experienced by a flying bird.

At such a time it often seems as if the bicycle itself possesses the power of seeing, for it somehow avoids all the rougher places on the road. Many a cyclist has ridden, and without fall or injury of any sort, over a road in the darkness of the night, pedaling along at high speed, where he would pick his way with the greatest caution by the light of day.

It is such experiences that lead the cyclist to feel an affection for his wheel, as a man may feel for a handsome, intelligent horse. He pats it, talks to it as if it could understand, and somehow it seems to answer to all his whims and emotions. It ceases to be a thing of iron and becomes endowed with breathing life.

So Frank Merriwell talked to his wheel, as he bent over the handle-bars and sent the handsome piece of mechanism skimming over the road, which lay like a gray, winding streak before him.

The spokes made a whirring sound as they cut through the air, and a feeling of elation filled the heart of the boy.

"Let them catch me now!" he cried.

Soon he came to where the road was ascending again, and it swiftly became so steep that he was forced to dismount and trundle the bicycle.

He looked back, but a bend in the pass had shut out anything like a view of the town, even if it had been bright moonlight or broad day.

However, there was a pink glow on the clouds at a certain spot, and he knew the fire was still burning.

"A queer Jew," muttered Frank. "It was most remarkable that he should do such a thing."

It was a long, toilsome ascent, and the road was very rough and rocky. He paused when he had reached the crest of the rise.

Then it was that, away along the road toward Red Rock he heard a rattling, rhythmical clatter of horses' hoofs, coming nearer and nearer, and growing more and more distinct with each moment.

"Pursued!" he palpitated. "It must be they suspect I came this way."

And then he cried once more:

"Let them catch me now!"

He leaped into the saddle and went skimming down the road. After getting a start, his feet rose to the coasters, and he allowed the bicycle to go it in a most reckless manner.

It was a wild dash through the night, with the wind humming past his ears. Occasionally he pressed the brake as the road seemed to wind before him, and it was needful that he kept constantly on the alert, with every nerve strained, else some sudden turn might have sent him plunging out of the beaten way to a smash-up amid the rocks on either hand.

As he wound round a sweeping bend, he heard the wailing shriek of a locomotive far below him, and saw the gleaming headlight of an engine that was creeping cautiously along, as if fearful of danger.

"The railroad is down there," muttered the boy. "I am coming to it again."

There was a bright glare that showed the black outlines of the engine and short train of box cars. The fireman had opened the furnace door, and was throwing in coal.

Then the train crept round a bend and disappeared into the cut that led through the notch.

Down the road spun the boy, and he was soon approaching the valley. Then it was that he seemed to hear another sound before him. It was a dull, steady roar, and he wondered what it could be. It caused him to apply the brake, for he did not care to rush headlong upon some unknown danger.

All at once—pop!—there was an explosive sound beneath him, and, a second later, Frank was on his feet beside his wheel, filled with the utmost dismay.

"A puncture!" he gasped. "Great Scott! that is bad! I have my repairing kit, but how am I to mend the tire in the night?"

Then he remembered that he was pursued. He listened, and, far away behind him from the crest of the rise, seemed to come the faint sound of galloping horses.

"Oh, they are after me all right!" he muttered, as he ran forward beside his wheel. "I can hear them, although the roaring sound down here partly drowns the sounds of their horses' feet."

By this time he had decided that the roaring sound must be that of a waterfall, and he soon discovered that he was right. He came to the mountain stream, which plunged over the rock here, and saw that the bridge of the road was just below the falls.

Somewhat lower down he saw some trestle work that he knew must be the railroad bridge.

"I must conceal myself, and let my pursuers pass me here," thought Frank.

When he came to the bridge he looked about for some place of hiding. In a moment he lifted the bicycle to his shoulder, and, bearing it thus, left the road, climbing down over some rocks, till he found a place where he could creep under one end of the bridge.

He did not reach this place of hiding too soon, for barely had he settled himself there when he heard the near approach of galloping horses, and then they were thundering over the bridge above his head. He made out that there were three of them, at least.

"Go it!" laughed Frank. "Scour the

road from here to Iron City, and take all you find."

He remained under the bridge till the sounds of clattering hoofs had died out, and then he crept forth. But he left his bicycle behind, for he had found a comfortable little corner down there on the rocks, and there he intended to remain and mend his punctured tire.

Frank's first task was to collect some dry pine wood, with which he could build a little fire. This he was able to do, and, with the wood, he crept back beneath the bridge.

He waited till he felt sure the horsemen were so far away that there was no danger that they would look back and see the light of the blaze, and then he lighted the fire.

With the aid of this, he heated the wire for burning out the proper shaped hole, found the puncture, and went to work.

In the repair kit were plugs of all sizes. He selected one that he considered the proper size, and tied a string around the small end. When the wire was heated, he burned out the hole, afterward cleaning off the burned bits of rubber with a little benzine. This attended to, he took up the plug, and doubled the flat end in a fold, which he grasped with the sharp-pointed pinchers. Then, with care and skill, he forced the folded flat end through the hole, and withdrew the pinchers leaving the plug inside the tire. Next he took hold of the string and pulled upon it till the small end of the plug was drawn through the hole. Having applied the nozzle to his tube of cement, he forced it through the hole beside the plug and pressed out a quantity of the sticky stuff. When he withdrew the nozzle, he turned the wheel so the puncture was on the lower side, and pulled the plug out as far as it would come. Then he pumped air into the tire, and fixed it so it would hang with the mended place on the lower side, which kept the cement about the head of the plug.

At the end of ten minutes Frank made an examination, and he laughed his satisfaction.

"I rather fancy that is as solid as any part of the tire," he said. "If it leaks,

I don't know how to mend a puncture." Then he cut off the protruding end of the plug close to the tire, pumped more air into the rubber tubing, and once more was ready for the road.

When he had put up his kit, he extinguished the little fire, and bore the wheel out from beneath the bridge.

Barely did he reach the road, however, before dark forms rose all around him, and a hoarse voice cried:

"Jump him, boys! We have him solid!"

CHAPTER X.

"I WILL FIND A WAY!"

Frank was surrounded, and his assailants were on him in a moment. The bicycle seemed to be in his way, and, before he could make any kind of defense, so sudden was the attack, he was hurled violently to the ground.

The shock of the fall stunned him, and he was pinned down by a big man, who harshly called:

"Give me ther ropes, boys! I'll tie him up!"

Merriwell had no chance, and he found himself bound and helpless before he fully recovered from the shock of the surprise and the fall.

"What'll we do with ther spy, boss?" asked one of the men. "Shall we drown'd him?"

"No," answered the big man, whose face was hidden by a mask. "We must git him away from here. Take him to Furgeson's old hut and keep him there till we can decide what shall be done with him. Two of you are enough to do that. Conk and Hod can look after him. One of you take his bisickle along."

Then Frank was jerked to his feet, which had not been tied. His hands were bound helplessly to his sides, so there was no possibility that he could prove in the least troublesome to his captors, unless he should foolishly refuse to obey them.

The two men selected to take charge of him stepped forward, and one of them said:

"If you try any tricks, young feller, you'll get yourself hurt so bad you'll never live to tell of it. I carry a pistol, and I shoot it off careless like when I

shoots it. All I want of you is ter march straight on after Conk, as will lead the way with that there bisickle of yours. Do you understand?"

"The question is quite unnecessary, sir," assured the boy captive. "You spoke distinctly, and quite loud enough to enable any one but a deaf man to hear and understand."

A growl came from the throat of the man with the pistol, which he flourished under Frank's nose.

"You're so flip with your talk that I kinder think you fancy I'm foolin'. Wal, I ain't. But, if you really think I am, just start and see how many steps you can take before I get enough lead inter yer to trip yer up."

"Never mind that," returned Merriwell. "We will omit it, as I am somewhat afraid the bullets might disagree with me."

This sort of coolness was something the ruffians did not understand, and it seemed to arouse their fears. They spoke in low tones among themselves, and then, after some moments, the boy was again ordered to follow the man with the bicycle.

They crossed the bridge and passed over the railroad track. Beyond the railroad they came to ascending ground, up which they slowly toiled.

The two ruffians talked more or less, and, from their conversation, Frank learned that the light of his fire beneath the bridge had been seen, for all of his precautions, and it had brought about his capture.

This caused the boy to regret that he had not delayed mending the punctured tire till he found a spot where he could have been sure of escaping discovery.

The road gradually wound round the side of a very high mountain, and it seemed to become rougher and tougher as they proceeded. For nearly an hour they toiled on, and then Frank saw they were making their way along a strip of road that seemed to have been hewn from the solid rock of the mountain side.

On one hand was a steep precipice that fell away toward the valley far below, while on the other hand was a bluff that was almost perpendicular in places.

The boy thought it would be an easy

task for his captors to dispose of him if they should choose to fling him from the road. Far down in the darkness of the valley he knew there must be trees and rocks. If he were cast over, he must be dashed to pieces away down there.

Frank shivered a bit and drew nearer the face of the bluff.

At last this dangerous strip of road was passed, and the captive breathed easier.

On they tramped for at least another hour. They turned from the regular road and made their way amid the rocks to a dark hollow away up there amid the black peaks.

In that dark hollow was an old hut, and Frank knew they had brought him to his place of imprisonment, at last.

The two men seemed relieved on reaching the spot, and, regardless of the fact that the captive displayed a desire to enter into conversation, they roughly bundled him into one of the two rooms into which the hut was divided, closed and fastened the door, and left him there.

"Well," thought Merriwell, with a long breath, "this is not exactly pleasant, but I'll make the best of it. I wonder what will come of this racket?"

He could find no furniture in the room, and so he sat down on the floor, with his back to the wall, and pondered on the matter for some time.

He wondered what sort of a gang of ruffians it could be who had made him captive the second time within an astonishingly brief space of time.

As he sat there, he heard the two men talking outside the hut, where it seemed that they were seated on the ground. He crept along cautiously till he was as near them as he could get, and paused there to listen. A smell of burning tobacco came through the chinks in the wall, and told him the men were smoking.

It was impossible for Frank to understand all they were saying, but he heard enough to tell him they were train-wreckers, and the band to which they belonged was contemplating some desperate move. Just what this was he did not learn, although he was anxious to do so.

At last, the conversation of the ruffians ceased, and, while he was thinking it over, the captive fell asleep.

Frank was awakened by the sound of

a voice that seemed familiar to his ears. The voice seemed close at hand, and, by a sudden exertion of will power, he kept himself from opening his eyes.

"Burn me if he ain't a cool one!" said the voice. "He is sleepin' like a baby! Seems ter take things as they come. Wal, hold him tight and fast till after we have done ther job, an' then I'll let yer know what's best ter be done with him."

Through his eyelashes the boy saw a man who had opened the door and was peering into the room. The face of the man was hidden by a mask, but that was not enough to keep Frank Merriwell from recognizing Dan Rockaway, the sheriff of Red Rock!

Despite his astonishment, the boy did not betray the fact that he was not asleep. The door closed, and Rockaway was gone.

"Great Scott!" whispered Frank. "What is the sheriff doing with these ruffians? I believe I smell a mice! I do! He is hand-and-glove with them. The jailer at Red Rock told me the sympathies of the people was with the train-wreckers, and I believe Rockaway is one of the gang!"

Outside Rockaway and the other ruffians were talking with less caution than they would have taken had they known the captive was awake and trying to hear what they were saying.

Listening closely, Frank heard enough to tell him that Rockaway, although he was not one of the striking workmen, had a grudge against the railroad company, and it was his desire to work the concern as much injury as possible. He was aiding the train-wreckers in order to obtain revenge.

But Frank learned still more. The train-wreckers were not composed entirely of strikers. The most of them were ruffians who were seeking to loot and plunder. Among them were two or three strikers, but the honest laborers had not turned their hands to the destruction of trains.

But what was most surprising of all to the captive was that Dan Rockaway pronounced the Jew peddler, Solomon Levi, a detective in the employ of the railroad company.

"He is Jack Suffern, or I'm a liar!" declared the sheriff. "And he has been around har long enough ter spot every man of us. That's why I was fer nabbin' him. I'd held him if ther boy hadn't helped him ter git erway. Ther boys are huntin' everywhar fer him, an' they'll cook his goose if they find him."

"A detective!" palpitated the captive lad, in blank amazement. "I never dreamed it! His disguise is perfect, and his Jewish accent and dialect is immense! Well, he is a dandy!"

After a while, Rockaway left, his last words being a warning for the men to watch the boy closely.

It was morning, and, about an hour after the sheriff's departure, one of the men brought the captive some hard-bread and smoked beef. Frank's hands were released long enough for him to eat, while the man kept watch of him, with a revolver ready for use, as if the lad were a desperate character.

When he had eaten all he desired, the man again tied him securely, and this time his feet were bound.

The captive had contemplated making a desperate effort to get away when the time came to tie him, but the second ruffian had appeared, and Frank was given no opportunity to make a break.

All the long forenoon Merriwell lay there a captive in the old hut. About all he could do was to roll over on his stomach when his back ached so much that he could not remain in that position longer. He suffered the most excruciating torture, and groans were wrung from his lips more than once.

He struggled with his bonds, but they would not give sufficiently for him to obtain his liberty.

Although he called to his guards time after time, it was mid-afternoon before one of them appeared again and brought him food and drink. By this time he was so desperate that he was determined to make an effort to get away as soon as he was released.

But the men seemed to fathom his design, for they did not set his hands free, and one of them fed him, having propped him up against the wall.

When they left him once more, Frank was more desperate than ever. He set to

work straining at his bonds with a fierce strength that seemed to make them give bit by bit.

"Oh, if I can get my hands free!" he thought. "They will have to kill me before they'll be able to take me again!"

For at least two hours he labored, and success finally rewarded his efforts. He freed his hands, and then hastened to clear his feet.

When this was done, he rose cautiously, stretching his cramped limbs. In the course of a few minutes he felt the numbness leave his arms and legs, and it seemed that he was ready to make a struggle for liberty.

Slipping along to a chink in the wall, he peered out.

At this moment a horseman appeared, riding up a rocky trail toward the spot.

Merriwell recognized the man as Bat Watkins.

Watkins was greeted with some interest by the two guards as he dismounted. He showed signs of excitement, and the boy heard him say:

"The very Old Nick is ter pay! That infernal detective has sent for a crew of officers to come to Iron City, and they're comin' on ther five-thirty train this afternoon; but that train'll never reach Iron City. The boys are goin' to dump her at Fisher's Falls. They've spread the rails on the bridge so ther hull train will go off inter ther creek. It is bound ter be a big smash-up, and it's doubtful if anybody on that train escapes with his life. The boss sent me up har ter tell Conk not to come down ter-night, as agreed on, but ter keep away till ther excitement is over."

"Fisher's Falls!" thought the boy in the hut. "That must be the place where I was captured last night. Is there no way I can reach Fisher's Falls in time to stop that train before it is sent to destruction from that bridge? I must find a way, for the lives of those on the train depend on my getting there! I will find a way!"

CHAPTER XI.

A DESPERATE BOY.

The men fell to talking excitedly outside the hut, and within the hut was a boy whose heart was fluttering and throb-bing with mingled hopes and fears.

Still watching, he saw Watkins care for the horse, while the other man said something about signaling to the "hide-out," and went away.

This was better fortune than Frank had expected, and it filled him with fresh hope. He resolved to make the attempt to escape while Hod and Conk were away. Still he felt that he must give Watkins the slip, for it was probable the man carried firearms, and he would not hesitate to shoot at Frank should he see the lad escaping.

The bicycle lay on the ground down in the hollow. Frank's eyes feasted on it with eagerness.

"Oh, to have it on a good road and get a start that would give me a fair show!" he whispered.

Then he tried the door. It was fastened on the outside, but, peeping through a crack, he saw it was held by a clasp.

Then the boy searched till he found a bit of wood which he could sliver off with his fingers. With this, he felt through the crack and lifted the clasp. Then he opened the door and stepped into the other room.

In a moment, his eyes fell on a gun that was standing in a corner. Just as he saw the gun, he heard a step approaching the door, and he knew Watkins was coming.

With a leap, the determined boy caught up the gun, whirling toward the door at the very instant Bat Watkins showed his ugly mug.

"Up with your hands!" sternly cried Frank, pointing the gun at Bat, who seemed utterly overcome with astonishment. "Up with them, or by heaven and earth, I'll shoot you dead in your tracks!"

The manner in which he said it showed that he was in deadly earnest, and, with a bitter snarl, the red-bearded ruffian elevated his hands.

"Come in!" ordered Frank, and Watkins reluctantly obeyed.

Keeping the desperado covered, the boy commanded:

"Turn your face toward that wall—so. Now walk straight ahead till I tell you to stop, and keep your hands up all the time."

The ruffian began to use abusive lan-

guage, but Frank silenced him with a word, and soon Bat had walked up till his nose was against the wall.

"Put your hands behind you."

Watkins did so, and, with some of the cord which lay near at hand, the lad made the ruffian secure.

Having tied Watkins' hands, Frank caused him to lie down on his face, and then tied his feet.

"I am very glad you came along just as you did," said the boy, "for you have given me some important information. I am going to make an attempt to reach Fisher's Falls in time to save that train. Good-day, Mr. Bat Watkins."

Then he was gone, leaving the ruffian to writhe and gnash his teeth with impotent rage.

Frank hurried to his bicycle, which he hastily examined. To his relief, he could not see that it was damaged in any way. Making sure the tire that had been punctured was holding air all right, Merriwell hastened down the path by which Watkins had approached the spot.

This path was too rough for Frank to attempt to ride on his wheel, but he went bounding and panting along, feeling that every second was precious. He carried the bicycle as if it were a feather.

Frank could not know how soon the ruffians Conk and Hod would return to the hut, but he prayed that they might not come back and find Watkins till it was too late for them to overtake him or prevent his reaching Fisher's Falls in any manner.

Finally he heard a clatter of hoofs behind him, followed by a shout.

Turning his head, he was astonished to see Bat Watkins coming down the rocky path at breakneck speed, mounted on his horse.

Frank realized that Hod and Conk had returned and let Watkins loose, or the man had succeeded in freeing himself from the cords.

"If he can ride a horse down this path, I can try to ride a bicycle!" came through the lad's set teeth.

In another moment he was mounted, and then the reckless flight began. Watkins greeted his action with a howl, and then—bang! bang! bang!—the man began shooting with a revolver.

Frank heard a bullet whistle past his head, while another flattened against a rock close at hand.

"It is a ride for life!" he panted, as he sent the wheel spinning down the path.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RIDE FOR LIFE.

Fortunately the young fugitive was not far from the road, and still more fortunately he managed by skill or sheer luck to avoid the great stones that sometimes rose in his way.

Out upon the road shot the bicycle, and the rocks hid the boy from his pursuer's view for a moment.

Instinct, more than anything else, caused Frank to turn the wheel in the right direction. For a little, the road before him was descending, and he fairly made the bicycle fly along.

A cry of rage broke from Bat Watkins when he came out into the road and saw how much of a start the fugitive had obtained. With fierce fury he lashed and spurred his horse in pursuit.

Merriwell looked back, and saw Watkins coming. A spirit of reckless defiance caused the boy to wave his hand and utter a derisive yell.

It seemed to Frank that he had obtained his "second wind" already, and never had the bicycle appeared to fly along so easily.

He came to rising ground, and sent the wheel climbing the ascent with remarkable speed. But he began to pant before the crest of the rise was reached, and he saw that he could not stand many pulls at such a pressure.

Fortunately no other hard pulls lay before him. The road ran downward, and it began to wind round the mountain. He remembered the bluff and the precipice which he had seen the previous night, but he also remembered that Watkins was pursuing, and, getting a good start, he lifted his feet to the coasters and let the bicycle go, depending on the brake to ease him round the dangerous point.

The wheel shot forward and downward, gaining speed with each moment. It sped along with the swiftness of an express train, and Watkins was hopelessly left behind. The air whistled as it passed

the boy's ears, and he could not breathe without difficulty. It seemed that the ground was running away beneath him, and rocks and bluffs raced by in a blur.

Then he came to the most dangerous portion of the road, and applied his brake. His heart leaped into his mouth, for the brake refused to bring pressure on the tire!

The man who had been trying to ride the wheel had damaged the brake so it was useless!

It seemed that the bicycle gained speed with each moment, and it whirled round the dangerous place in the road, requiring all the skill its rider could command to keep it from leaping straight off over the precipice.

Then came a shout, and the boy looked up. Far up amid the rocks were the two ruffians, Hod and Conk, who had made some short cut and reached the vicinity of the road in advance of Frank.

They were surging and pushing at a huge boulder, and, as the boy looked up, the great rock started on a downward plunge straight toward the road.

Frank made a mental calculation, and he saw that the boulder was bound to reach the road at the very moment when he was passing.

The horrified boy felt that he was doomed to destruction by the rushing rock.

Something like a prayer sprang up from his heart, and he closed his eyes, leaning forward over the handle bars.

At the very moment when he expected to be crushed out of existence he seemed to feel something brush his shoulder with a rush of wind, and still the bicycle flew onward with its rider.

Frank opened his eyes. The road lay before him, and the danger point was past.

How had he escaped?

He asked himself the question, for it seemed like a miracle.

The truth flashed through his brain like a shooting ray of light.

The great rock had bounded over him as he sped past, and he had felt it brush his shoulder!

A prayer of gratitude came from Frank Merriwell's lips.

He felt that he must escape all impend-

ing perils after being preserved from death in such a marvelous manner.

With a firm and steady hand he held to the handle-bars, while the bicycle bore him down the mountain road with the speed of the wind.

Soon the precipice lay behind him, and then, from far away, he heard the whistle of a locomotive.

The five-thirty train was coming!

"Shall I reach the bridge in time?" he panted.

Down and still down he was borne. Again he heard the whistle, and soon he reached a point where he could look into the valley.

The train was coming, but it was still hidden in the notch toward Red Rock.

How could he stop the bicycle when the valley was reached?

He felt that he must do so some way.

Then, risking a fall that must have meant broken limbs or sudden death, he did something he had not dared try as he was spinning along the road by the edge of the precipice.

He thrust one foot between the frame of the bicycle and the tire of the wheel, and used it as a brake.

It was time that he did so, for the valley was close at hand.

At first he could not see that the speed of the wheel was abated in the least, but he bore harder on the tire, and it soon slackened.

The valley was reached—the railroad crossing was reached! Then, risking everything, Frank leaped from the bicycle.

He struck on his feet and plunged forward on his face. The palms of his hands were cut and torn and he was almost stunned by the shock. But he rose to his feet, and he ran down the railroad track toward the approaching train, the smoke of which he could now see. He crossed the bridge just as the train came in sight round the bend beyond. On he ran, waving his cap, and crying:

"Stop! stop! stop!"

The engineer saw him, and the engine-whistle shrieked:

"Down brakes!"

The train slackened swiftly, and came to a stop when the locomotive was within two rods of the bridge.

Beside the track lay a boy who was utterly overcome by excitement and exhaustion, but he had foiled the train destroyers, and the express was saved!

The track was found to be spread upon the bridge, so that the train must have plunged off the trestle if it had not been stopped.

And on that train were Jack Suffern, the detective, and the men whom he had summoned to Iron City.

When they heard Frank Merriwell's story they fully realized what a remarkable thing the boy had done, and they honored him as he deserved.

Suffern was, in truth, "Solomon Levi, the Jew." He had disguised himself as a peddler, and found out the men who were wrecking trains and trying to ruin the railroad.

Suffern and his assistants made a number of arrests at Red Rock and Iron City, Dan Rockaway, the sheriff, being taken into custody. Later, they captured Bat Watkins and Bramber Sykes.

Before the bicycle boys left that vicinity they saw Dud Chubbs again, for he had come into Red Rock with his "pap."

Dud looked Frank over in silence for some time, and then he observed:

"I knowed you'd do anything you tried to do arter you jolted Bat Watkins the way you did the first time I saw ye. Any fellers that ever git in your way is going to be hurt, by scissors!"

It seemed that the very men who had received the bicycle boys with scowls and black looks when they entered Red Rock cheered them hoarsely as they rode out of the town to continue their journey across the continent.

[THE END.]

The next number (55) of the Tip Top Weekly will contain as the complete story "Frank Merriwell's Great Capture; or, Bicycle Against Horse," by the author of "Frank Merriwell."

TIP TOP WEEKLY.

A PUBLICATION FOR YOUNG AMERICANS.

NEW YORK, APRIL 24, 1897.

Terms to Tip Top Weekly Mail Subscribers.

(POSTAGE FREE.)

3 months	- - - - -	65c.	One year	- - - - -	\$2.50
4 months	- - - - -	85c.	2 copies one year	- - - - -	4.00
6 months	- - - - -	\$1.25	1 copy two years	- - - - -	4.00

HOW TO SEND MONEY.—By post office or express money order, registered letter, bank check or draft, at our risk. At your own risk if sent by postal note, currency, coin, or postage stamps on ordinary letter.

RECEIPTS.—Receipt of your remittance is acknowledged by proper change of number on your label. If not correct you have not been properly credited, and should let us know at once.

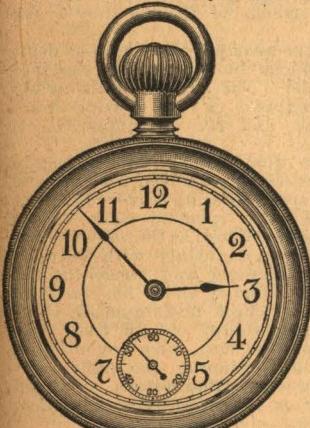
TO CLUB RAISERS.—Upon request we will send sample copies to aid you in obtaining subscribers.

All letters should be addressed to

STREET & SMITH'S TIP TOP WEEKLY,
232 William St., New York City.

Grand "Summer Sport" Contest.

FIFTY PRIZE WATCHES.



To commemorate the FIFTIETH issue of TIP TOP WEEKLY, the publishers have decided to offer to their young readers fifty splendid watches, made expressly for this publication by a well-known manufacturer.

The Contest.

All American boys are fond of outdoor sports, and they take a keen interest in athletic pursuits. To further their interests, fifty watches will be given to the fifty readers sending in the best answer to this question:

"What is your favorite summer sport and why?"

The name of the "sport" must be written on the coupon printed below, and addressed to TIP TOP WEEKLY "Sport" Contest, Street & Smith, New York City. The description (which should be brief) to be written on separate piece of paper.

This Contest closes June 1, 1897.

The above cut represents (½ size) the watch made expressly for this contest. It is a first-class stem-winding timekeeper, fully guaranteed in every particular.

IMPORTANT! After this date the coupons must not be pasted on postal cards. This change is made to avoid conflict with recent postal laws.

"SUMMER SPORT" COUPON.

Name of Sport _____

"PROFESSION" CONTEST.

Replies by Postal Only.

"What would you like to become, and why?"

Have you chosen your future profession or trade? If not, think of one you would like to adopt, and write the name and your reason for making the selection upon a POSTAL CARD and mail to this office.

Four Splendid Prizes!

- 1st. For the best answer a prize of \$5 will be given.
- 2d. For the next best, \$3.
- 3d. A fine regulation full-size football.
- 4th. A Baltimorean printing press, complete with type and outfit.

This contest closes April 30, 1897.

Address Tip Top Weekly "Profession" Contest,
Street & Smith, 232 William St., New York.

Calls With Tip Top Readers.

In next week's number of Tip Top Weekly will be published a detailed description, fully illustrated, of the valuable premiums offered by us in our novel subscription plan.

The popular author of the "Frank Merriwell" series is still engaged on the "Prize Plot" story suggested by Mr. Harry S. Adair, the winner of the contest. The date of publication will shortly be announced.

The following description of an incident in the life of the boy King of Spain, Alfonso XIII., will probably prove interesting to Tip Top Weekly readers. Despite his exalted position he is very much of a boy at times.

The King of Spain is very affectionate in his disposition, although he has a very firm will; and he tenderly loves his mother, whom he also greatly respects, and his sisters, who are his favorite playmates.

He seems, as he grows older, however, to be perfectly conscious of his exalted position. He knows that he is the king, and in the official ceremonies at which he has to be present he rarely becomes impatient, however long and solemn they may be.

One of these rare occasions was during a royal reception in the throne room. He was sitting at the right hand of the queen, and all the high functionaries and courtiers were filing past him, when he began to play with the white wand of office of the Duke of Medina-Sidonia, a great officer of the palace.

Suddenly leaving his seat and the wand of the duke, he ran down the steps of the throne, and mounted astride one of the bronze lions that stand on either side of it.

The act was so entirely childlike and spontaneous, and was performed with so much grace, that it gave every one present a sensation of real pleasure. Even the queen herself, while she regretted that the young king should have failed in the etiquette of the occasion, could not help smiling.

On another occasion of a similar kind he amused himself greatly watching the Chinese diplomats, looking with wonder and delight at their silk dresses, which he would touch from time to time with his little hands.

What most attracted his attention, however, was the Chinese minister's pigtail. He waited a long time in vain for a chance to look at it from behind, for the Chinese are a very polite people, and the minister would never think of turning his back upon the king. At last it occurred to Alfonso to run and hide himself in a corner of the vast apartment and watch for his opportunity, which he did.

After a while the president of the cabinet, seeing him in the corner, went over to him, and said:

"What is your majesty doing here?"

"Let me alone," answered the boy; "I am waiting for the Chinese minister to turn round so that I may steal up behind him and look at his pigtail."

Correspondence.

S. P., Galveston, Texas.—They will run indefinitely.

"Poly," Brooklyn, N. Y.—We do not know.

S. K. V. W. B., Mt. Vernon, Ind.—Yes.

A. C. P. (San Antonio, Texas).—To make gum arabic paste for artificial flowers and ornamental pasteboard work, take a common-sized teacup of cold soft water, and dissolve in it a large teaspoonful of the best and cleanest powdered gum-arabic. When the gum is entirely melted, stir in, by degrees, a tablespoonful of fine wheat flour, carefully pressing out the lumps, and making it as smooth as possible. Keep it closely covered and in a cool place. If, after a few days, it should appear spotted or moldy on the top, remove the surface, and the paste beneath will still be fit for use.

GERMAN STUDENTS' DUELS.

Dangerous but Seldom Deadly.

Not long ago the Emperor William wrote a letter to the deans of Heidelberg University in which he declared that dueling among German students must be stopped. It is thought that he was led to take this course by the outcome of an encounter in which a relative of Prince Hohenlohe had been engaged. The wounded youth, who was not at all popular, was marked in such a way as to disfigure him for life, and it is believed that this was done purposely. He was originally blessed with an unusually long proboscis, and ears of equally ample proportions. When he came out of the battle he was minus the prospecting portion of his nose, and both his aural appendages were cruelly split. Now, if there be one thing that a German student dotes on, it is a scar received in a duel; but there are scars and scars.

Nevertheless, even the German emperor is powerless to stop the dueling, which has become an integral feature of student life. It would be altogether wrong, however, to suppose that the students take part in these encounters solely because of their all-absorbing love of fighting. Far from it.

The German student is, as a rule, exceptionally courteous, and avoids giving offense to any one; but he is quick to resent an insult, and a mere apology does not pacify him. He despairs to strike a man with his fist. Blood, blood only, will satisfy an affront, no matter how slight.

The "mensur," as the duel is called, seems to have been got up for the express purpose of giving the participants an opportunity of slashing each other's faces in the most effective and picturesque manner possible. A student whose face is a network of livid scars is always looked upon with mingled awe and admiration.

The most popular university in Germany is that of Heidelberg. Here student life flourishes in its irrepressible vigor, retaining the most interesting features of the past and keeping well up with new ideas.

Scarcely has a student become enrolled here when he finds it almost obligatory to enter one of the many corps or societies to which 99 per cent. of the students belong. The most important and aristocratic are always called corps, and some of these are exceedingly exclusive and of very limited membership. The students wear the colors and insignia of their corps on all occasions, the most popular form taking the shape of a colored band round the cap, or a neat button or rosette in the buttonhole. On gala occasions, when some great duel is to be fought between the champions of two or more factions, broad sashes in the corps colors are worn by all the members.

Fairly launched as a full-fledged member of a corps, it does not take a student long to get into a first-class duel, or half a dozen of them if he exhibits too much pugnacity. Most of the richer corps have their own rooms, one of which is always very elaborately equipped for fighting. The freshmen, or "foxes," as they are called, are the more eager combatants, but they are not of much account, as they are unskilled in the handling of the heavy schlager, or sword.

As a typical example of a dueling encounter, we may describe one that recently took place between two champions of their respective corps. The cause of the fight appears to have been the disinclination of one of them to go out of his way when meeting the other in the street. To clinch the challenge and make its acceptance absolutely sure, a freshman was sent to the quarters of one of the champions with the message, "Compliments of Herr Blitzdonnerwetter, and he says that you are a 'dummer junge'" (silly boy).

That is the climax. A student who had been called a "dummer junge" and did not fight might as well throw himself into the river. He would instantly be kicked out of his corps in disgrace.

The challenge was, of course, accepted, and a committee of four attended to the arrangements, such as time, place, etc.

There is in Heidelberg a famous old inn, kept by a couple of aged spinsters, which has served as a rendezvous for duelists for more than half a century. One of the rooms is fitted up expressly for the purpose.

The principals are soon in waiting, prepared for the fight with an almost anxious care. Next to the skin each wears a coarse white linen shirt and a thick pad

under the right arm, which arm is then fitted into a thick leather glove and a silk sleeve. Then comes a sleeve of quilted canvas, about an inch thick, an elbow pad of leather, bound on with straps, and a canvas bandage over the whole. These bandages are so thick that it is impossible for the wearer's arm to hang by his side. On this account, each combatant is provided with an "untersteher," or supporter, whose duty it is to support the arm of his principal during the intervals. A thick quilted leather apron protects the chest, and reaches to the knees. Furthermore, a strong pair of iron-rimmed goggles is added to protect the eyes. The seconds, who often come in for stray blows, are provided with leather arm protectors and neck guards.

But here come the fighters, two big strapping fellows, bundled up somewhat like Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee in "Through the Looking Glass." The seconds are already in position, bending and whirling the long blades through the air to test them. The swords used are very large, something between a claymore and a rapier. They are about three-quarters of an inch to a quarter of an inch wide at the point, and perfectly straight. For about nine inches at the point they are extremely keen, the rest of the blade being blunt.

The umpire cries, "Auf die Mensur!" that is, the trial or measure. The antagonists advance and face each other. Another cry, "Silentum!" followed by a sharp "Let loose!" and the fight has begun. At once there is a tremendous clash of steel. Both men are skilled fencers and as strong as giants; fearful blows are discharged with lightning rapidity; and the highly-tempered blades flash streaks of fire as they swish through the air.

"Halt!" cries one of the seconds. His man has dealt his adversary a tremendous blow over the shoulder which has bent his rapier. The surgeon looks at the arm, says "Nothing!" a goblet or two of wine and a new sword are brought, and the encounter begins again.

The men, both veteran duelists, are now roused to the highest pitch. Occasionally you hear an exclamation from the excited spectators, such as—"That's it—let him have it!" "What a splendid slash!" The eye cannot follow the interlaced steel as the hail of blows grows more furious than ever. Suddenly, with "Halt!" both the seconds spring forward and strike up the swords of the combatants. One of them has received two frightful gashes in the cheek and forehead, while the other has had his chin almost cut in two. The blood fairly streams from the first, who, beyond himself with rage, insists on continuing the fight. But the surgeon declares his wounds too serious, and leads him off, while the other is taken away by his fellow corps-men.

SETTLED.

Owing to the illness of his regular boy, Dr. Joseph Marcus some weeks ago engaged a new lad named Tommy Jones. Tommy was a jewel, and when Joe, the first incumbent, was quite well again, the doctor was loath to let Tommy go. But Joe wanted to come back to his pleasant berth, and pleaded with his former employer.

A way out of the dilemma seemed to present itself, for the doctor said:

"Joe, if you can put the other boy out, you can get your job back."

"Do you mean that I must lick him?"

"That's about the size of it."

"All right."

When Dr. Marcus returned to his surgery that night he met a sight he never bargained for.

The glass in the door was smashed into smithereens. A marble clock on the mantelpiece was minus dial, glass and hands, while a handsome chair reposed on three legs; but Joe was in victorious possession, nursing a swollen cheek.

"Tommy's gone," he said, with a grin.

TOMMY'S ANSWER.

Uncle—"So you go to school, do you, Bobby?"

Bobby—"Yes, uncle."

"Let me hear you spell bread."

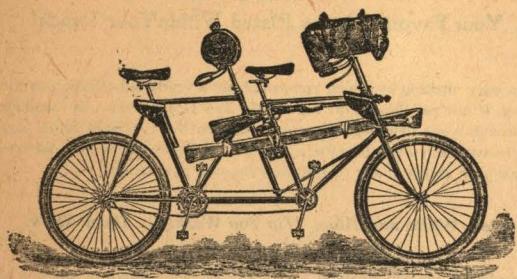
"B-r-e-d-e."

"Webster spells it with an 'a,' Bobby."

"Yes, uncle; but you didn't ask me how Webster spells it; you asked me how I spelled it."

Sports and Pastimes.

CYCLING.



Tandem equipped for a hunting and fishing trip.

Luggage Carriers. The wheel as ordinarily used for every-day getting about is scarcely considered complete unless it is equipped with a serviceable luggage carrier. Just think how many times you have walked owing to lack of arrangement for securely attaching a bundle to the frame of your bicycle. Of course, in these days the city rider has everything "sent," generally speaking, but there are still numerous occasions when the personal handling of packages cannot be avoided. It may be a book too large for the pocket, a bundle for the laundry, which the man forgot to call for, an extra wrap or something else. Those who overlook the importance of the luggage carrier might not suspect the fact, but upon thinking it over they will find that for want of it they often leave their wheels at home when they would much rather ride than walk. There is nothing new or startling in this year's carriers, although a number of devices show improved and novel arrangements for rendering the carrier inconspicuous when not in use. Almost any one of them now on the market will save its cost to the rider many times over in a single season. Very few cyclists use their wheels for pleasure riding only. The wheel perhaps fills its best purpose as an aid to the doing of things which must be done, and without the luggage carrier its capacity for assistance is needlessly limited.

Flush Joints. Men in the bicycle business say that many remonstrances may be expected this year from those who buy machines having flush joints, at what they will term the breaking of the tubes, but which in reality will be nothing more than a cracking of the enamel where a joint is made. While external joints were in vogue no such complaints were heard, for the brazing surface was generally so perfect that the vibration to which the machine was subjected when in use was not sufficient to disturb the relation of the metal parts, and, therefore, not enough to crack the enameled surface. In many of the new 1897 models, however, it has already been shown by testing that if there is the least bit of play in the joint the smooth surface of the enamel instantly discloses the weakness, and the rider is apt to imagine that a frame tube has been broken. It is hardly probable that in the highest grades of wheels having flush joints they are so constructed as to admit of any play at all. In fact, perfect rigidity is claimed for them, and it is possible that these claims will be borne out by the facts.

A Timely Warning. Once every two months should be enough to take a tolerably good wheel apart, and if half that is claimed for the 1897 wheels is true, and you have one of them, once a year should be sufficient. Many riders have a mania for taking their machines apart and talking of the great amount of time that is wasted in keeping bicycles in good order. Amateurs rarely do any good by looking into the bearings, and are as likely as not to do considerable harm by getting grit into the cups or failing to adjust the bearings so that they shall be just snug enough when they

put the parts together. So much depends on the adjustment of a wheel being exactly right that it is always wise to leave that matter to a thoroughly competent person. Pedal mounting is becoming more and more common. It is a good thing to avoid. It wrenches the wheel, and however carefully and strongly it may be made, successive shocks of that kind are certain to make trouble later in the season. Curb mounts are the best for the wheel.

—♦—

Without the Aid of a Camera.

To take portraits as the photographer does requires a camera and a number of chemicals of a troublesome kind, but any one desiring to take simple photographs of such things as the leaves of plants, or other flat objects, can do so with very little trouble and expense. A camera will not be needed, and only a few common things will have to be got.

A druggist's get a few cents' worth of bichromate of potash, and at the glazier's buy two pieces of window glass about eight or ten inches square.

Put about a pint of soft water in a glass bottle, and pour into it a small spoonful of the red powder. Shake the mixture well, and a rich orange-colored fluid will be obtained. This must be poured into a shallow dish like a soup plate, and then a number of sheets of soft paper like drawing paper procured. Lay these in the yellow mixture till they are well soaked, and then fish them out one at a time by the corners, and hang them up to dry in a dark place.

The yellow liquid may then be used to soak more sheets till it is used up, and the dish must be carefully washed out with warm water.

These sheets of paper are now sensitive to light, and if brought into the sunlight they will change color, go brown, and finally quite dark. While they are in the dark they will not change, and can be kept till the operator is ready to take the photographs.

To do this a couple of newspapers are wanted, and a piece of dark-colored cloth of some kind. Select a few handsome leaves from the plants in the window, some dried grass or flowers, or even some handsome lace or other flat objects that you wish to copy.

Foliage makes the best pictures, and if the leaves are arranged prettily the photographs will be all the more valuable.

First, lay one of the pieces of window glass, which must be clean and dry, and on this lay one of the newspapers folded up small and flat so as to make a kind of cushion. Then lay the piece of dark cloth over the folded newspaper, and on this lay a sheet of the prepared paper. On top of this place the leaves or dried flowers to be photographed, and then put the other piece of glass on top of all.

Having fastened the two pieces of glass together, set the whole in the full sunlight. Put something behind it, so that it will be at right angles with the sunlight.

The glass must lay with the top or front toward the sun, and where no shadow will fall on it as the sun moves. Here it must rest for at least half an hour, and perhaps much longer.

After a while the paper under the glass will begin to turn brown, and if it is left for an hour or more will become quite dark. Do not be in haste to examine it. Leave it till it is well done, even if it takes two hours.

When the paper is well colored, bring the whole thing into the house away from the sunlight, and then carefully lift the upper piece of glass. Take off the leaves or other objects on the paper, and there will be found a perfect representation of everything that lay on the paper, in light yellow on a dark ground. Every vein and stem, all the fine cuts and marks in the leaves and grass, will be printed, and all shaded just as the things are themselves.

As the yellow paper is now, it would soon fade, and in time the pictures would disappear. To prevent this, take the paper to a bowl of water, and gently soak and wash it in clear water.

The water will be immediately discolored, and must be poured away and further clear water applied. Repeat this several times, or till the yellow pictures on the paper are all washed out white, or till the water is no longer stained by the paper. Then dry the photograph, which can now be taken to the full sunlight without fear. It will not fade for a long time, and if the work is well done it will be found to make a very artistic picture.

Applause.

(Letters from TIP TOP WEEKLY readers are always acceptable.
Views and suggestions will be welcomed.)

Keokuk, Iowa, March 18, 1897.

Messrs. Street & Smith—

Dear Sirs: Allow me to congratulate you on the success of your Tip Top Library in this city.

Have read every number since you have been publishing them and am greatly pleased with them.

Andrew Whalen,
John J. Stafford.

Brooklyn, March 20, 1897.

Dear Sirs: I desire to write a few lines of praise in regard to the Tip Top Library. It certainly is "Tip Top" and every one who reads it says so. I have read them since they started and each one increases in interest and quality. I hope you will continue these fine stories.

K. T. Braman.

Poughkeepsie, March 21, 1897.

Dear Sir: I take the Tip Top Weekly every week and could not get along without it, for it is the same good paper. I have read all of them from No. 1 to 49.

Clinton Andrews.

Virginia, Ill., March 24, 1897.

Dear Sirs: I think your paper the "Tip Top," is one of the best papers I ever read for the money.

Yours truly, R. T. Angier.

Niagara Falls, N. Y., March 25, 1897.

Dear Sirs: I take great pleasure in writing you what we think of your Tip Top library. It is one of the best story papers for young and old' people ever published. Our club has read them from the start and we are going to follow them up.

We have also read the Diamond Dick, Jr., from the start. We think they are wonderful stories.

We have read all of your colored cover papers every week. They are all good.

V. L. Bartlett.

Utica, N. Y., March 26, 1897.

Dear Sirs: I have read the Tip Top Library since No. 1 and I think it is the best ever published, and I hope Frank will live forever.

Charles N. Kruebeck.

Chicago, Ill., March, 1897.

Sirs: I have been reading your Frank Merriwell stories and find them to be the best stories I have ever read. I hope you will continue to publish them. I have also read several of your Red, White and Blue stories and recommend them to all readers of good stories. I intend to take Tip Top to the end which I hope will never come.

Earl H. Hughes.

Atlantic City, N. J., March 27, 28 S. Virginia Avenue.

Dear Sirs: Our club has read every number of the Tip Top Library. All the members think it is the best book out.

We hope you will keep the library up. We remain,
Clarence Downs, president.
Eugene Bylawski, vice-president.

Portland, Ore., February 23, 1897.

Gentlemen: We, the officers of the Tip Top Club of Portland, Ore., on behalf of the members wish to let you know what we think of your Frank Merriwell stories.

They could not be better; in fact we have read a great many different libraries, but none half as good as Tip Top. Our club is composed of seventeen members.

Geo. H. Dunn, president; Edw. J. Wiley, vice-president; Chas. B. Clarke, treasurer; R. G. Prescott, secretary.

Lock Haven, Pa., February 26, 1897.

Gentlemen: We have written to you to inform you that your Tip Top Library is great. We have a club called "Liberty Club."

We meet every Saturday night and read Frank Merriwell. Wishing Tip Top a successful and long life we close.

Yours truly, Gordon C. Enoch,
H. Cassel.

A Novel Premium Offer!!

Your Favorite Papers Placed Within Your Reach!

An easy method by which you can obtain a yearly subscription to the *Red, White and Blue*, *Tip Top Weekly* and *Good News*. By sending through your newsdealer premium coupon No. 1, printed below and fifty cents each week for nine weeks, you will receive by mail for one year your choice of any two of the following publications:

Red, White and Blue. Tip Top Weekly. Good News.

In addition we will give you free of all cost, your choice of any one of the following splendid articles: *Novelty Electric Motor; Simplex Typewriter; Steam Launch; Pocket Magazine Camera*, or a handsome *Watch*, guaranteed good timepiece.

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